THE ORAL NATURE OF THE HOMERIC SIMILE

BY

WILLIAM C. SCOTT

WITH 2 PLATES

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WILLIAM C. SCOTT

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LUGDUNI BATAVORUM E. J. BRILL MCMLXXIV

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PREFACE

The present study of the Homeric simile begins with a familiar assumption, that the writer was an oral poet. There are already numerous studies of poetic techniques in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which are dependent on the hypothesis that Homer was an oral poet. On such an assumption one can study a wide spectrum of topics ranging from rather precise matters, such as versification and word choice, to broader concerns of type scenes and developing themes. The idea that Homer was an oral poet similar in most respects to present day oral poets has not found a warm reception in all quarters since no critic can compare contemporary oral verse with the Homeric poems without noticing several important discrepancies. And yet it is the basic assumption of this study that the phrasing and composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were deeply rooted in a long and complex tradition of oral poetry. Whatever may be the true picture of Homer in the act of composition, it at least seems clear that he was a poet who was fully acquainted with and steeped in such a tradition. Once this is granted, many of the features of Homeric verse which seem so familiar to writers and readers must be examined to ensure that our understanding of these features is based on an awareness of the capabilities and the techniques of an oral poet. Where it is not—and this is often true of our understanding of the similes—there is need for further exploration.

The extended Homeric simile, which is a hallmark of the epic style, has been used with great effect by Vergil and Milton who in so many ways acknowledge their dependence on and inspiration from Homer. Still there are great differences in the old Homeric simile when it is taken over by the two later writers. Vergil and Milton created their longer similes with full understanding and consciousness of the literary tradition in which they were writing skillfully matching details between simile and narrative, adding color to their texts, and developing themes by their artful handling of this small form. The simile in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is never so close in its parallels to the narrative nor so related to a consistent theme, and yet it is in its own way highly effective. As in the later written epics, Homer's perceptive employment of the simile presupposes a

certain amount of practice and most probably a tradition by which the form, phrasing, and usage of the simile were defined and developed. Tradition so completely dominated the individual lines and type scenes throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that it would seem odd if there were not an inheritance of customary practice in singing similes from earlier poets. In spite of the suspicion that Homer drew on a tradition which was as strong as that influencing Vergil and Milton, such a tradition remains largely hidden because of the disappearance of Greek epics earlier than or contemporary with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Yet to attempt to define this tradition and to delineate the extent of its influence is possible because of the consistent and economical system which lies at the root of improvised oral composition. Whereas Vergil and Milton could always draw upon the tradition to aid their creative efforts but were not bound to it, an oral poet works within the limits of a strong tradition which he follows with regularity because of the pressure from his audience, the circumstances of composition, and the normal limitations of a human mind. It is possible to find patterns of words and motifs in the poetry of Vergil and Milton and such patterns reveal much about the techniques and intent of these poets. Though is easier to find patterns of phrasing and scene construction in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, these patterns do not reveal as much about the individual poet Homer as they do about the oral tradition in which the poet was educated and which, therefore, underlies the poems.

In regard to the similes there are surprisingly consistent patterns of usage which can be found in their placement, their subject, their extension, and their phrasing. By comparing the various simile groups and families, it is possible to trace with some degree of accuracy the simile materials which the tradition offered to Homer as an aid in composition. Such conclusions are more relevant to the collective body of practicing oral poets who carried on the tradition than to Homer. In a real sense any study of the patterns of society as revealed in a single phenomenon tells far more about the society—poets and painters, mothers and children, craftsmen and teachers—than it does about the individual ordering force behind the phenomenon.

The Homeric simile is merely one aspect of a much larger creation, the stories and the poetry of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. However masterful the artistry of these poems may be, it can only be enhanced

by an understanding of the tradition which lies behind, or rather permeates, every line and scene. As the similes in the *Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* become more meaningful when compared to their models, so also Homer's similes gain in meaning when the tradition in which they are firmly rooted is better understood.

Many people have aided me in completing this study; I am most indebted to President James I. Armstrong of Middlebury College, to Professor Bernard Fenik of Princeton University, and to Professor Max Treu of the University of Munich, all of whom were faithful guides as this project grew from an idea to a completed manuscript. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Nancy Heffernan who saved me from many mistakes by her careful reading of the manuscript. I am further grateful to Dartmouth College for a Faculty Fellowship for post-doctoral research, which enabled me to extend my study in order to examine the structure and extension of the similes and to explore the possible connections to art works. Dartmouth College has also aided in the publication costs for this book.

To those many friends and colleagues who have read portions of this book in manuscript and who have enlarged my understanding by their generous criticism, I offer my grateful appreciation.

Hanover, N.H. W. C. S.
December 1972

CHAPTER ONE

THE SIMILES AND THEIR CRITICS

A recent guidebook for writers by E. B. White contains the following advice:

> *Use figures of speech sparingly.*
>
> The simile is a common device and a useful one, but similes coming in rapid fire, one right on top of another, are more distracting than illuminating. The reader needs time to catch his breath; he can't be expected to compare everything with something else, and no relief in sight.
>
> When you use metaphor, do not mix it up. That is, don't start by calling something a sword fish and end by calling it an hourglass.[1]

This pithy comment contains two suggestions: first, a writer should not use many similes in a row; and second, once he picks an image, he should develop it rather than jump nervously from subject to subject. Of course, Homer never wrote such a book of helpful hints for young poets; but if he had, his feelings about similes would probably have been different, at least in view of this passage:

> Just as a destructive fire consumes an endless forest on the peaks of a mountain, and the blaze is seen far away, so did the gleam from the wondrous armor of the men as they marched rise up to the heavens through the air.
>
> And as many flocks of winged birds, of geese or cranes or long-necked swans, fly this way and that in the fields of Asia near the streams of Cayster, delighting in their flight—with loud cries they advance and settle and the field echoes with their cries, so did the many tribes of men pour forth from the ships and the tents onto the plain by Scamander. And the earth resounded terribly from the marching of the men and

[1] W. Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (New York 1959, p. 66 f.

their horses. In their thousands they stood on the flowering plain of the Scamander, as numerous as are the leaves and flowers in spring.

As the many close-packed swarms of flies crowd throughout the herdsman's barns in the springtime, when milk fills the pails, just so many long-haired Achaeans stood in the plain facing the Trojans, eager to destroy them.[2]

(2.455-473)[3]

There is a great difference in the theory and practice represented by E. B. White and Homer. E. B. White has the freedom of the blank page and the eraser. He can let his thoughts lead him wherever they wish, then retrace his steps rearranging and removing those words which do not serve his purpose. Homer, on the other hand, accepted the limitations of a tradition. His stories were old and familiar, and his characters had already been depicted many times performing the same acts in the same situations. Even his language was a hand-me-down from poets who had told the same tale in the same words for generations. If Homer made a mistake or a slip in taste, there was no second chance and no eraser. What had once passed the poet's lips had to stand as it was, to be modified and corrected either immediately or not at all. In spite of the difference between a prose-writer and a poet, both men are devoted to composing clearly, concisely, and effectively. E. B. White, however, is relatively free; Homer volunteered to be constrained by the bonds of a strong tradition.[4]

[2] Where linguistic matter is not important, I will use translation with no Greek text. For the prosaic translations accompanying the text I take full responsibility. They were not done with an eye toward immortality but rather with the hope that they would illustrate clearly the point under discussion. The text used throughout has been the Oxford text of Monro and Allen.

[3] Throughout this study citations to the *Iliad* will be given by the number of the book of the *Iliad* and the line number. Citations to the *Odyssey* will be in the same form but will be prefaced by "Od." Thus, 5.59 refers to the *Iliad* while Od. 5.59 refers to the *Odyssey*.

[4] This contrast has been well expressed by F. P. Magoun, Jr., "Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry", *Speculum* 28 (1953), pp. 446-467: "Whereas a lettered poet of any time or place, composing (as he does and must) with the aid of writing materials and with deliberation, creates his own language as he proceeds, the unlettered singer, ordinarily composing rapidly and extempore before a live audience, must and does call upon ready-made language, upon a vast reservoir of formulas filling just

It is that tradition, especially in regard to the simile, which I intend to examine. The subject for such a study is almost exclusively the two Homeric poems, the sole extant exemplars of early Greek epic. In other early poets there are traces of epic diction used in a manner which may appear oral. However, only the two monumental poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, preserve closely the language and the method of the oral epic poet.[5] It is not necessary to enter into the battle over the authorship of each poem since it is sufficient for my purpose that the poems are based on the same traditional diction. I suspect that one man was the composer of both poems; ultimately it may be shown that two different men are responsible —or ten. Nonetheless, the language of the two works is fairly uniform; the myriad hypothetical "poets Homer" seem, at least, to have been trained in the same tradition.[6]

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measures of verse. These formulas develop over a long period of time; they are the creation of countless generations of singers and can express all the ideas a singer will need in order to tell his story, itself usually traditional." (p. 446).

[5] Cf. the discussion of criteria for assessing oral quality by G. S. Kirk, "Formular Language and Oral Quality," *YCS* 20 (1966), pp. 155-174.

[6] Parry (p. 239 f.) found the diction uniform—even if the authors were many: "On trouve ainsi entre la diction de l'*Iliade* et celle de l'*Odyssée* une similitude des plus complètes, mais il faut pourtant se garder d'y voir la moindre preuve de ce qu'on appelle l'unité des poèmes homériques. Nous savons seulement que l'auteur ou les auteurs de ces deux poèmes suivent fidèlement la tradition de la diction aédique et c'est pour cette raison que leurs styles, à en juger par l'emploi de l'épithète, se ressemblent jusqu'en leurs moindres détails." For recent discussion of the linguistic and formulaic differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* see D. Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford 1955), pp. 149-159 and an answer by Webster, pp. 276-283. G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962), pp. 288-300 explores both arguments and calls for further evidence before any firm conclusions can be reached: "This result [the difference in style between the two poems] could not be absolutely dissociated from the effects of advancing age in a single main composer..., but like other differences it is probably better explained on the assumption of separate composers, of whom the poet of the *Odyssey* was already familiar with the *Iliad,* though he probably had not assimilated the whole poem into his own repertoire." Cf. also M. van der Valk, "The Formulaic Character of Homeric Poetry and the Relation between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," *L'Antiquité Classique* 35 (1966), esp. pp. 46-70. In support of Parry's statement Webster notes the comments of H. N. Porter, "The Early Greek Hexameter," *YCS* 12 (1951), p. 27: "The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* differ very little from each other in the 1,000-line samples examined in this paper. When compared with any of the other texts they present a common front. The differences between them are slight... The evidence of the structure of the line strongly supports the unity, if not of authorship or of time, at least of style of the two poems."

The Homeric simile has not been studied as intensively as have Homeric morphology, epic formulae, the boar's tusk helmet, or the major themes and movements of the poems; and yet the simile is a basic characteristic of Homeric epic and has been imitated by all successors in the genre.[7] Such lack of attention by scholars is as surprising as the sedulous devotion of later epic writers. Similes seem an apt scholarly topic but are not always ideally suited to the advancement of the narrative. They are little pictures which are spread widely through the poems. They slow down the action rather than advancing it. Similes, which lack the brilliant gleam of the heroic warrior and have none of the romantic, adventurous spirit of an Odysseus, refuse to raise the mind to heroic heights. They bring it back to the humble hearths of the common man. Their characters are typically men who quarrel over the boundary marker of their corn field or old women who squabble in the streets. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* may be compared to a picture galley in which the similes are the small and rather fine etchings hung between the large and colorful canvasses on which the acknowledged masters of the world have exhibited their genius.

A study focusing on small elements in a larger whole tends to confuse one's perspective. The major motifs and episodes of the narrative exist separately from the similes. Characters and events could have been, and were, portrayed equally well without them. In its nature the simile is only a supplement that can lend momentary vividness to an episode or aid in emphasizing a vital fact. But by itself it cannot give luster to a shabby scene or immortalize an otherwise insignificant object; the narrative must achieve its results in its own way. Then, and only then, can the simile reinforce the development of the plot. Since similes must be continually regarded as smaller components of the total epic, a critic should always view each simile as a means to a greater end, the epic tale.

Previous scholarship on individual similes and on the generic form has raised six basic questions:

1. How much of a simile did the poet know before he began to sing? To what extent did the simile exist in the tradition?
2. How closely can one connect simile and narrative?

[7] For a discussion of later poets' techniques in writing similes see W. D. Anderson, "Notes on the Simile in Homer and his Successors," *CJ* 53 (1957), pp. 81-87 and 127-133.

3. Is there any principle guiding the placement of the similes?
4. Are simile families used in a traditional way? Is there any consistent pattern in the use of various subjects?
5. How does the simile supplement the oral narrative and aid it in telling the story more effectively?
6. Is Homer's handling of the simile consistent with the methods of oral poetry?

Highly probable answers have been found to some of these questions, while others remain under consideration. A brief and necessarily selective survey of the previous work on Homeric similes will delineate the limits of present understanding and reveal the areas in which basic questions remain.

1. *How much of a simile did the poet know before he began to sing?*—The extent to which the similes existed in a prepared form available to the poet whenever the need arose has been the subject of controversy. At one extreme is the statement of Gilbert Murray:

> Even the similes, the very breath of life of the poetry of Homer, are in many cases, indeed usually, adopted ready-made. Their vividness, their closeness of observation, their air of freshness and spontaneity, are all deceptive. Nearly all of them are taken over from older books, and many of them were originally written to describe some quite different occasion.[8]

G. P. Shipp, having demonstrated that the similes show a significantly high proportion of late linguistic forms, takes a middle position when he states:

> The "Homeric" simile must have a long history behind it, and it is a very natural view that its full development is later than that of the art of the narrative which it adorns.[9]

Representing the other extreme T. B. L. Webster calls the long similes Homer's personal compositions. The short comparisons were inherited: "These old short comparisons were the themes which

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[8] Murray, p. 249. Cf. J. Duchemin, "A Propos des Comparaisons dans l'*Iliade*," *Information Litteraire* 12 (1960), pp. 113-118 and "Aspects Pastoraux de la Poésie Homérique. Les Comparaisons dans l'*Iliade*," *REG* 73 (1960), pp. 362-415.

[9] Shipp, p. 212.

Homer expanded into long similes adapted to the particular scene that he is describing".[10]

Repeated similes are significant in determining the traditional nature of the simile. Webster states that the poet has free choice "to repeat instead of varying". Often there appears to be an element of conscious reminiscence in the second occurrence of the simile; both Agamemnon and Patroclus weep like fountains before they attempt to sway Achilles (9.14 and 16.3).[11] On the other hand the majority of Analysts have attacked the repeated similes as insertions into the text or signs of a late text. Typical is the comment of Leaf on the repeated simile of the galloping stallion (6.506 and 15.263):

> We have here ... a clear plagiarism of a passage whose intrinsic beauty marked it out for plunder. How a single 'Homer' could have thus repeated his own best passages, careless of their appropriateness, it is for the defenders of the unity of the *Iliad* to say.[12]

However, even when Analysts employ a similar method, the results are often contradictory and, therefore, self-defeating. A. Shewan has catalogued the internal dissent.[13] There seems to be no proof of the age or the originality of the similes here.

W. Schadewaldt has shown that the spirit which created the similes is far from that which stimulated the artists of Minoan-Mycenaean art.[14] R. Hampe has tied the subjects, treatment, and stylistic mannerisms of Geometric artists to those of Homer concluding that the similes were conceived and grew in the epic diction during the eighth century. In addition, Shipp writes that the lion as a single creature in a simile has no relation to the Mycenaean representations of lion hunts.[15] From the evidence of these three studies, it seems likely that the similes were formed late in the tra-

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[10] Webster, p. 235.

[11] Webster, pp. 235-6 and Whitman, pp. 279-283. On the question of repeated similes, however see infra pp. 127-140.

[12] Leaf on 15.263-68. He does not consider this simile an interpolation; it is firmly "embedded" in Book 15.

[13] A. Shewan, "Suspected Flaws in Homeric Similes" in *Homeric Essays* (Oxford 1935), pp. 217-228.

[14] W. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (4th ed.; Stuttgart 1965), pp. 130-154.

[15] Shipp, p. 213 ff.

ditional diction, at least later than the narrative. Their similarity to the Geometric art of the eight century is probably the key to the date of their present formation, a date which linguistic evidence tends to reinforce.

2. *How closely can one connect simile and narrative?*—The exact connection between simile and narrative has been defined in various ways. Finsler felt that there was one, and only one, point of contact between simile and narrative. The simile was a self-contained picture developed in itself and for itself giving a feeling of richness and beauty to the story.[16] Wilamowitz examined many individual similes and found a similarity of tone (*Stimmungsgleichnis*) between simile and narrative in many cases. Ajax is like a lion in his feelings, but like an ass in his behavior. There is no room for the squeamishness which will not sanction the comparison of an heroic warrior to an ass. Since the poet has inserted the simile into the narrative concentrating on the poetic effectiveness of the image, the toilsome search for the single, proper *tertium comparationis* has little point for Wilamowitz.[17] H. Fränkel continued and expanded this approach. He lists the similes and examines the multiple connections between simile and narrative, the contributions of tone, and the echoes from simile to simile. He admits finally that any connection is valid:

> Fragen wir schliesslich, aus welchen Gebieten die Ähnlichkeiten entstammen, so müssen wir antworten: aus allen von denen überhaupt homerische Dichtung etwas zu künden weiss.[18]

K. Riezler takes the more metaphysical approach that both the narrative and the simile are interwoven and grow together. Homer has seen the essential oneness in two separate phenomena, which is

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[16] G. Finsler, *Homer* (3rd ed.; Leipzig and Berlin 1924) II, p. 258 ff.

[17] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Die Ilias und Homer* (2nd ed.; Berlin 1920), p. 193 f. Cf. T. Plüss, "Mykenische und nachmykenische Gleichnisse der *Ilias*," *Zeitschrift für das Gymnasialwesen* 64 (1910), pp. 612-619: the simile "... solle eine gefühlsstarke Vorstellung von dem nicht anschaubaren Charakter eines epischen Hauptvorganges möglichst lebendig ausdrücken" (p. 613).

[18] Fränkel, p. 106. For opposition to Fränkel's approach see G. Jachmann, *Der homerische Schiffskatalog und die Ilias* (Köln und Opladen 1958), pp. 267-338. In support of Fränkel see M. van der Valk, *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad* (Leiden 1964) II, pp. 475 f. and 654-5.

the key to early philosophy, and Homer's works become the first literary evidence of philosophic thought.[19]

Simile and narrative are connected—but beyond this statement scholars disagree. Current criticism favors poetic unity: the complete picture drawn in the simile is tied intricately to events in the narrative, while its tone or atmosphere may heighten the emotions in the story.

3. *Is there any principle guiding the placement of the similes?*—No scholar has yet undertaken a systematic study of this question, although types of passages in which similes repeatedly appear have been pointed out. M. Coffey divided these passages into the following categories: movement or lack of movement, appearance of a hero, noise, measurement, time measures, numbers, various narrative situations, and psychological characteristics. F. Müller adds passages which describe the unusual, the difficult to sing, meaningful moments in the battle, and scenes of weapons. DeVelsen in an older study found similes used often in scenes of crowds or in the journeys of gods. Many people have felt that there should be traditional places in the story at which the poet would sing a simile. Though several suggestions have been made, proof of these propositions requires a general study of all similes in the Homeric poems.

4. *Is there any consistent pattern in the use of various simile subjects?*—Scholars have noticed that there are families of similes; for example, the lion family or the bird similes though the question of a traditional usage of the various subject families had not been fully explored. F. Krupp divides the families as follows: elements of nature, world of flowers, life of animals, life of men, inner life of men, religious figures.[20] Others have similar or modified classifications.[21] Only H. Fränkel of Homeric critics has systematically attempted to relate the subject matter of the similes to the context in which they occur. He has found certain constant symbols: a storm represents an attack; the sea, a mass of warriors or people; a rock, a king or leader; and clouds, a group of followers or a mass of warriors. In his

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[19] K. Riezler, "Das homerische Gleichnis und der Anfang der Philosophie," *Die Antike* 12 (1936), pp. 253-271. Cf. Snell, pp. 199-204.

[20] F. Krupp, *Die homerischen Gleichnisse* (Zweibrücken 1883).

[21] Cf. the detailed analysis of simile subjects by E. G. Wilkins, "A Classification of the Similes of Homer," *CW* 13 (1919-20), pp. 147-150 and 154-159.

study Fränkel grouped the similes as members of families and then established repeated symbolic equivalents which relate the simile to the narrative.[22] His method required a close look at the details in the simile to find connections to the narriative. M. Coffey has recently called for a study with the opposite orientation, namely a focus on the details in the narrative in order to find connections to the general subject of the simile:

> The frequent recurrence of certain kinds of subject matter, such as wind and birds, suggests that many are stock comparisons deriving from generations of bards and used to illustrate common events in the narrative, e.g. speed of movement.[23]

This would be a study of the narrative contexts in which certain simile families repeatedly occur. I intend to follow this suggestion.

5. *How does the simile supplement the oral narrative and aid it in telling the story more effectively?*—Beyond very general statements about the values of the simile in bejeweling the narrative and very particular statements about the force of certain similes in enhancing individual passages, little has been written about the simile as a device of the poet in telling an effective story. Wilamowitz considered only the individual similes; Fränkel lists various ways in which the similes can aid the poet in single scenes.[24] K. Riezler shows how similes participate in the larger movement of the narrative. He defines several functions of the simile: some tell how the story could have developed but did not; some demonstrate the mixing of god and man; many keep before us the mixture of war and peace; several foreshadow future events.[25] T. B. L. Webster points out the technique of "cross-referencing" by similes which permits similes to contribute importantly to the telling of the tale. When the Trojans camp before the Greek wall, two weather similes express the contrasting emotions of the Trojans and the Greeks: fair weather on land characterizes the Trojans; foul weather at sea, the Greeks (8.555 and 9.4).[26] Few scholars have, however, examined the

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[22] Fränkel, pp. 16-25.
[23] M. Coffey, "The Similes of the *Odyssey*," *BICS* 2 (1955), p. 27.
[24] Fränkel, esp., p. 98 f.
[25] Riezler *op. cit.* (supra, n. 19).
[26] Wilamowitz (supra, n. 17), p. 32 f. and Webster, p. 231 f. For opposition to this view see Jachmann (supra, n. 18), p. 309 ff.

relationship of narrative and simile in extended passages, a problem which will be explored further here.

6. *Is Homer's handling of the simile consistent with the methods of oral poetry?*—Finally there is oral poetry itself. Scholars have assumed that the Homeric simile is an element rooted in a tradition of oral, not written, poetry. M. Coffey assures us that at least "the comparisons and similes of the *Odyssey*, though a complicated literary device, have like other aspects of the Homeric language the fundamental characteristics of an oral manner of composition".[27] J. A. Notopoulos has called for further work on this question:

> Why single out the similes as the sole evidence of Homeric originality, when it is becoming increasingly apparent that the whole texture of Homeric poetry—aside from the architecture, length, and perhaps characterization—is traditional, subject of course to the originality that is possible in using traditional material? Our aesthetic perceptions of the freshness of Homeric similes have blinded us to the fact that the similes, no less than the formulae, the type-scenes, and the themes, are part and parcel of the oral tradition.[28]

This statement is the guiding principle of this study. That the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are purely oral poetry has never been proved to the satisfaction of all critics, and perhaps it never will. The strongest claim for the oral nature of the poems depends on continuing studies of particular facets of Homeric style or diction since each time the composition, phrasing, or content of a passage is perceptively examined with reference to the traditional manner of oral composition, the oral quality of the poems can be more precisely defined. I shall assume in this study of the nature of the similes that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the products of oral verse-making or are so closely related to that process that they are best criticised and studied on the basis of such an assumption. Homer remains a misty figure—perhaps a blind, wandering poet of ancient fame, but also a mortal bard with sensitive and yet human intellect, human strengths, and human weaknesses, who earned his living by com-

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[27] M. Coffey *op. cit.* (supra, n. 23).

[28] J. A. Notopoulos, "Homeric Similes in the Light of Oral Poetry," *CJ* 52 (1957), pp. 323-328 (p. 326 f.).

posing oral songs about the glories of former heroes. Perhaps Homer is a member of a society which had begun to learn to write—a poet who could draw on the tradition of oral verse in order to write longer, more complex, and more subtle poetry in the spirit of previous epic. In either case Homer was thorougly steeped in the language and techniques of oral verse-making and several conclusions may be validly drawn about his poetry as a reflection of the conditions of oral creation.

The scholars of this century have dated the origin of the similes with admirable accuracy considering the vagueness of the evidence. With the guidance of Wilamowitz, Fränkel, and Riezler literary critics have come to understand and explore the unity of simile and narrative. But concerning the actual handling of the simile—the placement, the choice of subject matter, the use of the simile in telling the tale, and the technique by which the simile is extended—the record is small. It is these points which will be examined in the following chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRADITIONAL POET I: THE PLACEMENT OF THE SIMILES

One of the most obvious questions concerning Homeric similes is: why have all the similes of countless subjects and countless usages been placed in their particular positions in the narrative? At one extreme the answer could be poetic freedom; placement would depend solely on the sensitivity or whim of the individual poet. But there are several contexts in the narrative where a simile is quite usual—where a reader of today is not surprised to see a simile and where the poet was not being notably creative or innovative in introducing such an image. For example, once a person has read:

> Apollo came like the night...
>
> Thetis came forth from the grey sea like a mist...

he is not startled or dazzled to find:

> Thetis jumped down from snowy Olympus like a hawk...
>
> Athena flew away like a bird...
>
> Athena hurried to the couch of Nausicaa like a breath of wind...
>
> (1.47, 1.359, 18.616, Od. 1.320, and Od. 6.20)

In the Homeric poems when gods and goddesses travel from place to place, they are so often described by a simile that there seems to be a pattern of placement determined by traditional guidelines. These guidelines are based in the oral tradition since they are derived more from the context and its customary development than from the free creative impluse of the poet.

The idea that Homer drew on a strong tradition is scarcely new. Indeed, it is the basis for our understanding of epithets and type scenes. While literary critics must always allow the poet to surrender to the press of time and to his idiosyncratic urges, it is clear that the oral tradition permeates every section of the poems. Oral verse is composed in terms of individual scenes which in conjunction form a larger general plot. The individual scenes, the lines which compose

them, and the half-line building blocks, all are dominated by the poet's recollection of the scene as it has been sung for generations. There is, of course, always room for modification to adapt the inherited scene to its new location. The larger plot—judging from information concerning the Cyclic Epics—tended to be dictated by tradition, such as the several epic songs which centered on the Trojan War and the Theban War. But again the particular development of the tale remained in the hands of the poet. Homer was, consequently, always involved in the necessity of choosing between various elements of the tradition.

Oral poets construct their poems from individual short scenes so that the narrative is continually moving from one unit of action to another. The transition can be made smoothly, though it is often clear from the abruptness of the intervening lines that one scene has ended and another has begun in the poet's mind. His style is marked by such introductions as:

πρῶτος δὲ ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων . . .
Ἰδομενεὺς δ' ἄρα Φαῖστον ἐνήρατο Μῄονος υἱὸν . . .
Τὸν μὲν ἄρ' Ἰδομενῆος ἐσύλευον θεράποντες·
υἱὸν δὲ Στροφίοιο Σκαμάνδριον, αἵμονα θήρης . . .
Μηριόνης δὲ Φέρεκλον ἐνήρατο, τέκτονος υἱὸν . . .
Πήδαιον δ' ἄρ' ἔπεφνε Μέγης, Ἀντήνορος υἱόν . . .
Εὐρύπυλος δ' Εὐαιμονίδης Ὑψήνορα δῖον . . .
(5.38, 43, 48-49, 59, 69, 76)

In the passage from which these lines are taken the poet wants to sing a series of killings by individual Greek warriors. This series is introduced by the words:

Τρῶας δ' ἔκλιναν Δαναοί· ἕλε δ' ἄνδρα ἕκαστος
ἡγεμόνων· πρῶτος δὲ ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων . . .
(5.37-38)

There follows a list of six unconnected woundings, each one joined to the last by the word "δέ". Then the series is summarized by one closing line. When the poet moves to the next major scene, the reentrance of Diomedes, the transition is marked by another "δέ".

If one of these six small scenes had fallen out, it probably would

not have been missed either by the listeners or by later critics; at any moment after two or three short scenes the bard could have inserted the closing line and turned to Diomedes, his principal subject. At the end of the fourth, fifth, or sixth short description there was the alternative, a summary line or another short description of a killing. These are examples of the units from which Homer constructed his poems. Anticipation of possibilities and choice from among such alternatives are essential to the method of the oral poet.

This method is equally apparent in the placing of similes. In the course of singing a scene, the poet knew the alternatives for continuing his narrative, and it is still possible to determine those junctures in the narrative where the tradition suggested the simile as an alternative. The investigation of a number of such junctures will aid in defining those guidelines handed down in the oral tradition which influenced the location of similes.

Most of the occurrences of the simile accompany the normal themes which are used by the poet in composing his epic. Albert Lord has defined themes as: "the groups of ideas regularly used in a telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song".[1] For example, there are enough journeys of gods and descriptions of armies in the Homeric poems to establish these two scenes as themes which the poet employed in advancing his story. When the simile occurs as a normal extension or element of such a theme, the standard junctures in the narrative at which similes can occur become limited and admit of definition within the existing categories of the oral poet's thought.

To define these themes, it is necessary to impose a momentary restriction upon the reading of the poems: the content of the simile must be neglected. The search is for the scenes where a simile—long or short, fish or fowl—seems natural and, perhaps, expected. Context is essential for such a study while content is momentarily meaningless.

In addition, there is a second type of passage in which the poet will often sing a simile which does not accompany a theme but rather reinforces the effects which the poet makes through his narrative. The simile lengthens and colors the passage and, thereby, gives emphasis to a scene which the poet feels is important for his

[1] A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge 1960), p. 68.

story. Many dead heroes are carried away from the battle with little elaboration; but when the battle is drawn over the slain Patroclus, there is a need to impress the passage upon the minds of the audience so that the poet can return later to that same scene. In this case a series of similes is effective in making noteworthy and memorable a situation which is otherwise without particular distinction. One of a countless number of available alternatives is the simile. Because the context is not an identifiable narrative theme, there is little reason to define a list of alternatives; rather parallels must be established which show that the simile accompanies a patterned method of composition.

The simile is suggested to the oral singer by certain contexts of these two types which will be analysed in the first two sections of this chapter. First, there are nine thematic contexts where Homer has the option of chosing a simile from among several traditional alternatives. The placement of the simile can be explained in terms of traditional alternatives about sixty-two percent of the time. In the second section the repeated use of the simile in a scene which cannot be isolated as a narrative theme will be examined.

Of course, the license which is granted to any poet can never be forgotten and Homer was certainly capable of improvising in utter disdain of pattern or tradition. Scholars may search for solid foundations for their ideas, but the oral poet can always deceive them. Therefore the principles which are discovered by this study should not be expected to be absolute. Tradition is almost always a matter of percentages, and it will be sufficient to show that Homer to a significant degree confined his similes to a limited number of narrative situations.

I. Similes Joined to Themes

1. *The Journeys of Gods*

The appearance of immortals among men is common in the Homeric poems. Homer, who is by no means as careful of motivating their entrances and exits as he is in the case of mortals, often has them appear from nowhere and for no particular reason except to aid a hero or to confront another divinity. Apollo and Athena take active part in the horce race but have not been previously brought to earth by the poet (23.382 ff.). In Book 3 when Aphrodite saves

Paris by breaking the chin strap on his helmet (3.374), she is physically present in the poem for the first time. Such omnipresence may accord well with the idea of a powerful divinity, but it also demonstrates that Homer was not overly scrupulous or concerned in moving gods and goddesses neatly from this place to that on the earth.

However, when Homer takes time describing a god's descent from Olympus to earth or the return trip back to his divine home, he concentrates on the details and the significance of the journey. There is always a motive for the entrance or withdrawal of the divinity. The journey has its causes in the narrative and is introduced in order to achieve a specific effect. For example, in Book 1 of the *Iliad* Apollo, Athena, and Thetis all journey from their divine homes (Olympus or the depths of the sea) to the battlefield at Troy. Apollo had been invoked by Chryses because of Agamemnon's stubborn and insolent refusal to return Chryseis. Because of Apollo's entrance, Achilles (and Hera) have grounds for calling a conference of the Greek leaders. Later Athena is sent by Hera to stop Achilles from killing Agamemnon because both goddesses love and care for the two warriors. It is Athena's entrance that motivates Achilles to turn to another type of vengeance. Thetis rises from the sea in answer to Achilles' prayer. She goes up to Olympus to carry her son's wishes to Zeus, and her request is the cause of the plan of Zeus. While gods may wander in and out of human situations and mingle freely with mortals, Homer does not allow them to drop down from the sky or emerge from the sea arbitrarily. He seems to have made a distinction between these two types of divine action. A god walking upon the earth may have appeared strange and unusual to the Homer's audience; [2] but it was the journey of a divinity between heaven and earth which was marked by the poet as a significant event.[3]

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[2] Often this strangeness was marked by a simile; see infra, 24 ff.

[3] The significance of the event need not always be quite as great as it is in Book 1, as for example, when Apollo descends at the command of Zeus to carry the body of Sarpedon away for burial (16.676 ff.), the journey from Olympus is motivated, but it does not have the wide-ranging importance of the four journeys in Book 1. In a case like this the significance of the god's entrance must be measured in terms which are fitting both to oral poetry and the particular episode. Sarpedon is the last hero Patroclus meets who offers any resistance, and after Apollo comes for the body of Sarpedon, Patroclus succumbs to the dangerous infatuation of attempting to take

Divine journeys are presented in a very limited number of ways. Sometimes they are described in standard lines:

βῆ {ῥα / δὲ} κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων {—⏑⏑—— / ————} eight times

βῆ δὲ κατ' Ἰδαίων ὀρέων —⏑⏑—⏓ six times

This is the simplest way to present a divine journey since it requires only one line and immediately, with the god at his destination, the action proceeds. This unadorned statement may be augmented by a simile as in Book 1 Apollo comes like the night (1.47) and Thetis comes to her son like a mist (1.359). Iris is sent to the battlefield to order Poseidon to leave:

> So he spoke and swift, wind-footed Iris did not disobey him, but she went down from the hills of Ida to sacred Ilium. Just as when down from the clouds snow or freezing hail flies before the blast of the north wind which is born high in the bright air, so rapidly did swift Iris in her eagerness descend; and standing near she spoke to the famed Earth-shaker . . .
>
> (15.168-173)

Here the simple description of her descent is supplemented by a simile which expresses the swiftness of her flight. Similes are used often in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in such a scene. Sometimes the immediate comparison is to the divinity's swiftness, sometimes to his appearance, and sometimes to the unnatural length of his trip (cf. 15.80, 21.493, 5.864, and 5.770). In nineteen cases of a divinity traveling between heaven and earth, a simile is present

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Troy. Thus it is not merely the entrance of the god from Olympus which makes this scene significant, but the poet himself in lines 685 ff. calls attention to the new direction of the narrative. Since one of the most imperative demands on an oral poet is the appropriate variation of pace, pauses like this one allow the poet to separate one episode from the other and make a new beginning without becoming entangled in the details of a subtle modulation. This entrance of the god may not be as significant as the appeal by Thetis to Zeus in Book 1, but in terms of the story of Book 16 the entrance of Apollo is important. The same could be said of the frequent entrances and exits of gods and goddesses in Book 5, which mark the turning points in the development of that particular section of the narrative and are, consequently, significant within the framework and perspective of Book 5.

which characterizes some aspect of the journey (13 in the *Iliad*; 6 in the *Odyssey*).[4] It is only to be expected that there are varying ways of attaching the simile to this type of scene since journeys of gods must have been common in a tradition which mixed the divine and the mortal with no embarrassment.

These are two ways of presenting the divine journey: the simple two-line statement and the simile, but there are other alternatives. The list of two-line descriptions above is not complete. Other words and lines for a simple statement of travel exist, some with no parallel in the existing remains of epic. Or the poet can list the route taken by a divinity. When Hera darts from Olympus to Lemnos, the poet gives her route: Pieria, Emathia, Thrace, Athos, Lemnos (14.244 ff.). Routes, although not in such complete timetable form, are also listed in the cases of Iris and Hermes (24.80 and Od. 5.51).[5] Finally there are divine journeys which are characterized by a scene of preparation. Twice Athena arms and Hera harnesses the horses before they go to Troy (5.719 ff. and 8.382 ff.). The preparation of the chariot and the arming of the god is told before Zeus and, later, Poseidon make trips (8.41 and 13.23). Though Poseidon does not drive the whole way, the horses take him most of the way to Troy. Hermes puts on his sandals twice, and Athena dons hers once (24.340. Od. 5.44, and Od. 1.96).[6]

The fact that each of these passages contains lines which are repeated in this type of scene and no other is good evidence that such divine preparation was traditionally sung in a scene of a god journeying between worlds:

> He spoke and }
Going there he } harnassed bronze-hoofed horses to the chariot, swift horses with long golden manes; and he put gold armor about himself and took his gold whip, well-made, and climbed into his chariot.
>
> (8.41-44 and 13.23-26)

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[4] This placement of the simile has been noted by deVelsen, p. 7 and Coffey, p. 119 f.

[5] Probably the trip of Athena from the suburbs of Phaeacia to her temple at Athens is based on a similar technique; however she is not travelling between worlds (Od. 7.78).

[6] This alternative may explain the dark blue veil which Thetis takes with her to go to Zeus at 24.93 ff. It is a minor preparation.

> Thus speaking she }
> Immediately he } bound his beautiful sandals upon his feet, immortal and golden, which bore him over the sea and endless stretches of earth with the speed of the wind.
>
> (24.340-42, Od. 1.96-98, and Od. 5.44-46)

Such a scene of preparation could lead to little else but a journey since these preparations would be unnecessary if the god were going to stay at home. However, that a number of lines are repeated exactly suggests a type scene of preparation for such a trip. When the poet chose this alternative, such scenes were at hand in the tradition allowing him to sing easily of harnassing, arming, dressing, and mounting. He had only to choose among the various passages to prepare a god to enter the narrative.

At 8.438 Zeus drives the chariot to Olympus and there Poseidon unyokes the horses and covers the cart. This scene is a balance to that previously prepared chariot at 8.41, since it represents care for the chariot, but immediately after the journey instead of immediately before. This may be another, but unparalleled, type of traveling scene or merely a small inversion that the oral poet arranged. He wanted to mention the vehicle, but recalling the earlier scene he inverted the order. There is such a short distance between the two passages that both could be embraced even in a short song.

These four versions of one scene demonstrate the principle of alternatives which is basic to this study. When the poet wanted to break into the narrative to provide new motivation, to begin a new phase of action, or to achieve some specific effect, he could insert a brief episode which brought a god from Olympus into the human situation. To describe the journey of a god between his divine home and the earth, he had at least four choices. He could state the simple fact, he could embellish the scene with a simile, he could list the route of the god, or he could explain the divine preparation.

The choice between alternatives did not depend on the importance of the mission to the larger plot of the whole poem; rather it was a matter of appropriateness to the individual scene. Because Thetis always comes on sorrowful missions, it would not be the place for describing the yoking of the divine team or pointing out her falcon-like swiftness which would distract the hearer when he

ought to be concentrating on the import of her mission. When Zeus goes to Mount Ida "exulting in his glory", the simple line would sound insufficient, especially when the audience knew that the divine chariot and the golden armor traditionally enhanced Zeus' glory.[7] The choice between alternative journeying scenes depends on immediate aesthetic appropriateness rather than on the significance of the particular scene within the larger narrative.

As an oral poet sang, he anticipated. When he wanted to describe a divine journey, he chose from at least four methods of presenting it the one most appropriate to the details of the surrounding context. One of these alternatives was the simile, whose frequent appearance at this point in the narrative indicates that its placement was well established in the oral tradition.

2. *Measurement*

The Homeric poet could measure some quantities of space and time quite precisely; the catalogue of ships has made momentary mathematicians of all close readers. Time could be marked by set intervals: day and night were general terms; sunrise, noon, and sunset were fixed points of reference; days and years were totaled. But aside from these minor precisions Homer seems uninterested in exact measurement, a characteristic not peculiar to Homer; many poets have the same aversion to facts and figures. From Aeschylus, whose Clytemnestra heard of so many wounds to her husband that he seemed "more pierced than a fishnet," to Robert Frost's lonely traveler who has miles to go before he sleeps, poets have invoked the same principle: use approximate measurements when the use of precise figures does not serve a poetic purpose and will merely bore or distract the audience.

Homer uses many approximate measures to illustrate size, distance, time, number, speed, and degrees of loudness, of quality, and of brightness. Often such measurements are expressed by a simile. For example, when Patroclus charges against the Lycians in his aristeia, they give way before him, but the distance which they retreat is not given exactly; rather it is indicated approximately by a simile:

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[7] This chariot and armor seem to be traditional heavenly equipment, since when Poseidon travels to Troy, the same lines are used (8.41-44 = 13.23-26).

> As far as the flight of a long javelin which a man throws with all his might either in a contest or in war before the murderous enemy, so far did the Trojans retreat . . .
>
> (16.589-92)

In the two poems there are thirty-five instances of a simile used to express measurement, both short comparisons and long similes (*Iliad* 21; *Odyssey* 14).[8]

Size is often expressed by a comparison. The approximate height of waves is twice given by reference to mountains (Od. 3.290 and Od. 11.243). Priam's eagle of omen has a wingspread as wide as a treasure house door (24.317).

Similes of distance are the most numerous type of approximate measure. The horses of Menelaus are only a small bit behind those of Antilochus, only as far as a horse is from the chariot wheel (23.517), and in the iron-throwing contest Polypoetes throws the iron weight as far as a shepherd can fling his crook (23.845).

Items can always be listed by exact numbers. Yet when the poet must create for his audience the picture of the endless numbers of the Greek army, he places three similes in a row (2.459, 468, and 469). These similes express an infinite quantity—flocks of birds, numbers of flowers or leaves, and swarms of flies. The simile about leaves or flowers is repeated when Odysseus describes the number of Cicones:

> μυρίοι, ὅσσα τε φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρῃ . . .
> ἦλθον ἔπειθ' ὅσα φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα γίγνεται ὥρῃ . . .
>
> (2.468 and Od. 9.51)

This repeated simile is important. When the poet wanted to indicate the size of a crowd, he could give a general number, he cou d use the word for crowd, or he could sing a simile, however twice when confronted with this situation, he chose to sing a simile and in both cases the same simile came to mind. The repetition of this simile in the same situation is strong evidence for the system of alternatives which underlies the placement of the simile in the Homeric poems.

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[8] This use of the simile was cited by deVelsen, p. 19, Hampe, p. 17 f., and Coffey, p. 124-5.

Horses which are swift as birds and a quick divine cure by Paeëon are examples of similes used to express relative speed (2.764 and 5.902). The cry of the wounded Ares which is like nine or ten thousand warriors is a comparison for loudness (5.860). A point of time is once set by a passage very much like a simile. Though it is an independent picture within the narrative, it is introduced by the word "when" and rejoined to the narrative by the word "then" (11.85). Degree of quality can be indicated by a simile. The robe which Hecuba takes to the goddess and the robe which Helen gives to Telemachus are both the fairest of their kind and shine like stars (6.295 and Od. 15.108).[9] Penelope washes the shroud and it shines like the sun or the moon—a measure of its brightness—just as pitch is a measure of blackness (Od. 24.148 and 4.277).

Closely related to similes of measurement is one which expresses shape. Idomeneus sees a round spot like the moon on the forehead of the leading horse (23.455).

To conclude, exact measure cannot be given by similes. But the poet has little need for exact measure and uses the simile to give an approximate idea of standards of quantity and quality. This much can be determined about the placement of the simile by looking solely at its context.

It is worth a moment's digression to comment on the context of this particular group of similes because they contain two varieties of measure. Compare two similes describing size: the wife of the Laestrygonian king is as large as a mountain peak while the stake which is plunged into the Cyclops' eye is as thick as a ship's mast (Od. 10.113 *vs.* Od. 9.322). The image of the ship's mast can be readily grasped by the mind; any listener in Homer's audience who had seen a ship could easily imagine the approximate dimensions of the stake. The simile of the mountain peak describing a giant woman suggests indefinite size. The category "mountain" knows no limit in the human imagination; it is as though Homer said of the Laestrygonian queen, "She was so huge you could not imagine it!"

There are places where it is appropriate for the poet to call to

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[9] 6.294-5 = Od. 15.107-8. This short simile may have been traditionally connected with these lines which comment on the quality of the robe. The similarities between the two passages extend even further; 6.293 is similar to Od. 15.106 while 6.296 is similar to Od. 15.109.

mind a size which is almost inconceivable; but there are also passages where the poet feels a need to suggest a size which is not left to the imagination and, in fact, is very limited in its scope. The story of Odysseus, the suddenly small man, in the cave of Polyphemus, the giant, is an example. Odysseus' first view of the Cyclops is terrifying and he reveals his fright by using a simile of monstrous size and inhuman nature:

> For he was a monstrous wonder, and was not like a man who eats bread but like a wooded peak among the lofty mountains which is seen alone apart from the others.
>
> (Od. 9.190-2)

After the initial fright at the thought of the Cyclops dies down, the similes no longer suggest infinite extent but describe objects which are limited in their size. To describe the stake which will put out the Cyclops' eye, a simile of the ship's mast is actually an approximation to a known object in Homer's world. It is important that this simile be familiar to the audience. The stake must be large in order to agree with the size of Polyphemus; but it must not be so big that all sense of realism is destroyed, since Odysseus then becomes a man wandering in a fairy tale instead of a hero and the illusion of heroic epic is shattered. Generally, when the Greeks entered an imaginary world, they did not give free rein to their thought, carrying every object and quality to its greatest possible development. Rather they insisted on a believable, if enlarged, world. As one critic puts it:

> To them [the Greeks], the imaginary supernatural adventures of *Märchen* remained pointless and unattractive. The Greek did not desire to ignore or overstep human limitations so much as to master and control them . . . . Like the hybrid monsters of eastern imagination when they came under Greek artists' hands, the northern *Märchen* had to be re-formed and retold in more natural human terms before a Greek literary audience could accept them.[10]

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[10] R. Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics* (Berkeley 1946), p. 70.

To Homer it was vital to preserve the "realism" of the Cyclops' cave. The Cyclops is an overgrown man, and his possessions are inflated objects of a normal shepherd. Although men have never seen such a world, the poet can describe it with an air of great reality. In creating this world similes which allow approximation and which limit the size of objects are preferable to similes which allow the imagination to think in general, almost limitless, dimensions.

Similes of distance are drawn mostly from everyday life. There are no lions, tigers, or Pygmies; rather there are mule teams and shepherds mixed with javelin-, discus-, and spearthrowers. Thus the distances described would be meaningful to an audience which knew the countryside and would recognize these common sights. Yet there are also distance similes which impose no limit on the imagination. Homer says that the horses of Hera leap as far as a man looking over the water can see (5.770). Since no hearer could make a meaningful approximation of such a measure, Homer merely means that the horses bounded an unimaginable distance, an idea well suited to divine horses.

This small digression, focused on the content of similes describing measurement rather than on the context, shows one element which would determine Homer's choice between similes. There seem to be two types of similes as alternatives. He can choose a simile which suggests a meaningful approximation or one which conveys an idea of infinite extent, and the choice between alternatives once again depends upon the intent of the poet in forming each passage.

3. *Actions of Divine Beings*

Gods interact freely with men throughout the narrative of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Often they are merely presented like any other actor in the story, and divine actions convey their amazing quality directly. When Apollo cries out to Patroclus that he is not fated to take Troy and hurls him back from the city wall, the unnatural mixing of god with man is portrayed in factual statements of actions. Whatever sense of amazement, wonder, or horror is raised in the audience is created by the direct telling of the event. Sometimes, however, the actions of divine beings are further augmented by a simile which emphasizes their unnatural

qualities. An example of such a simile occurs in the one-sided battle between Xanthus and Hephaestus:

> So she spoke and Hephaestus made ready a fiercely blazing fire. First he kindled a fire on the plain and burned the many corpses slain by Achilles, which were there in abundance. All the plain was parched and the shining water was stopped. Just as when the north wind in autumn quickly dries an orchard which has been freshly watered and delights the man who tends it, so was the whole plain dried . . .
>
> (21.342-48)

Similes, both short and long, are used in such a position seventy-four times in both poems (*Iliad* 31; *Odyssey* 33).[11]

One extensive group of these similes depicts the appearances of gods. Athena, Apollo, and Sleep sit among men as birds (7.59, 14.290 and Od. 22.240). Ares and Apollo shout with multi-throated loudness (5.860 and 14.148). Xanthos roars like a bull and bubbles like a pot (21.237 and 362). The old man of the sea is like a shepherd among his seals (Od. 4.413). Even the possessions of the immortals receive similes, as Poseidon's sword, Hera's glistening veil, and the drug from Hermes—all of which are characterized by a simile (14.386, 14.185, and Od. 10.304).

The miraculous deeds of gods for gods and gods for men are commonly described by a simile. The divine doctor Paeëon heals Ares in milk-curdling time, and the scene where Hephaestus attacks Xanthus is quoted above (5.902 and 21.346). When gods mingle with men, they have the ability to defend (4.130 and 13.564), entrance (13.437 and Od. 10.216), inspire (15.605), glorify or beautify (Od. 6.232 and Od. 18.193), or destroy man and man's creations (15.362 and Od. 5.368). All these scenes of divine intermingling contain a simile.

There is a special type of scene when a warrior challenges a god, for such an encounter of man and god is regarded as a unified event containing the action of a divine being. When Diomedes attacks Apollo, a simile is formally attached to the actions of Diomedes; yet such similes are present frequently enough in scenes of mortal vs. god to demonstrate that the poet viewed such events as versions

[11] Cf. Fränkel, pp. 29 f., 46 f., 56 f., and 99 and Müller, p. 179.

of the theme of divine action (cf. 5.438 = 5.459 = 5.884). The simile in this position occurs also when Patroclus attacks Apollo and when Achilles attacks Apollo as he carries Hector off in a cloud (16.705 and 20.447). In each of these five related passages the simile is the same: "δαίμονι ἶσος". At 21.252 and 257 Achilles retreats before the advances of the river Xanthus in a scene of mortal vs. god containing two similes. The fact that the subject of these similes differs from the other battles of man vs. god indicates that the placement is a traditional feature and dependent on context, while the content of the simile can change without affecting the tradition determining placement. Further examples occur at Od. 12.418 = Od. 14.308, Od. 12.433, and Od. 5.371.

There are at least three alternative ways of singing passages describing the actions of gods. The scene can be directly told with the enhancement due to divinity contained in the words and phrases of the narrative. The picture of Vulcan's workshop and Calypso's isle and cave are examples of this treatment (18.410 ff. and Od. 5.59 ff). Secondly, the reactions of men can show their awe at a divine appearance, as when Athena holds the aegis before the suitors, and they scatter in panic (Od. 22.299). Finally the poet can insert a simile.

There are repeated similes in this category. Apollo and Ares shout loudly; both shouts are described by the same simile:

ὅσσον τ' ἐννεάχιλοι ἐπίαχον ἢ δεκάχιλοι
ἀνέρες ἐν πολέμῳ ἔριδα ξυνάγοντες Ἄρηος.

(5.860 and 14.148)

Odysseus is twice beautified by Athena and the simile is repeated (Od. 6.232 and Od. 18.193). Twice Zeus sends a storm to scatter Odysseus' ships; each time the same simile appears as part of a repeated scene (Od. 12.418 and Od. 14.308). Because none of these repeated similes occurs elsewhere in the Homeric poems, it seems that they were traditional alternatives accompanying scenes of divine action.

3A. Actions of Spirits and Monsters

Several objects and events in the Homeric poems are connected with ghostly appearances or monsters. While these characters are

not gods, still the use of the simile to describe the actions of a being other than human suggests that the simile is placed in this context because of a close relation to the theme of divine action. An oral poet probably thinks more about the objects and actions which form the themes of his narrative than about abstract categories; it would, therefore, be unfair to predicate a category of strange or unusual occurrences. Most representative of the poet's thinking is a grouping of the scenes of divine actions where a simile occurs; separately one can construct a list of the relatively smaller number of similes which describe the acts of other non-human beings.

There are two occasions where ghosts are described by a simile. When Achilles tries to embrace the ghost of Patroclus, it eludes his grasp and flees like smoke (23.100), and similarly the souls of the suitors are like bats (Od. 24.6).

The most frequent examples of this use of the simile reinforce the action of the giants or monsters in the *Odyssey*. The giant wife of the Laestrygonian king causes horror, and the Laestrygonians spear the Greeks from the sea like fishermen (Od. 10.113 and 124). The Cyclops dashes out the brains of these diminutive Greeks as though they were puppies, eats them as a lion eats its prey, and sets a huge rock in place at his cave door as easily as a man places a lid on a quiver (Od. 9.289, 292, and 314). When Odysseus and his men enact their vengenance on their uncouth host, they struggle like a man drilling a ship timber and Polyphemus' eye hisses as loudly as a huge, hot axe-head dipped into water (Od. 9.384 and 391).

Turning again momentarily to the content, one should notice that these similes reinforce the idea of giants as inflated men, who live recognizably normal lives but on a monstrous scale. I have commented previously on Homer's desire to keep descriptions of fantasy worlds on a realistic scale,[12] an aim fully evident in the frequent use of similes to illustrate the wondrous world of the Cyclops. The similes describe an act that normal-sized men would do, like putting a lid on a quiver or spearing a fish, but the narrative event so illustrated is giant-sized. Similes from normal life enhance the realistic and awesome massiveness of the fantasy world of the *Odyssey*.

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[12] See supra, p. 20 ff.

4. *Themes of Specific Emotions*

It has been maintained that Homer lacked the words and, consequently, the ability to express precisely complex phenomena within the soul.[13] He could appreciate the feelings and could describe the extremes of ecstasy and agony but could not analyse the subtle psychological causes of such feelings or talk easily about simultaneous opposing forces involved in an inner struggle. With such linguistic studies few have found fault. To express feelings of joy, sorrow, anger, and fear the poet has verbs. These verbs are the poet's most common means for expressing emotion: δείδιας, ἀχνύμενος, ἰάνθη, and ἐχάρη are easy and direct presentations of psychological feeling. There are also nouns representing emotions: μένος, χόλος, θάρσος, ἄχος. Finally there are adjectives like ἀσπαστός, χαίρων and ἐχθρός to describe the emotion aroused in a person when brought in contact with an object or event. Usually descriptions of emotions which are built from such words are short statements of fact. The poet does not look inside the person for the cause of the disturbance or the complexity of the human response. The situation is clear enough to justify the emotion and no secondary feelings or inner tensions are presented.

Though the poet does not analyze emotion explicitly, he does have varying ways of recording psychological phenomena. Through these descriptions he portrays all the intensity of feeling that more learned later writers were able to attain with later sophistication. One of his methods was to emphasize various emotional states by using a simile.[14]

The distinction between content and context must be strictly maintained. There are many similes in the two poems in which an emotion is clearly portrayed, while the context does not deal with emotion. In Book 15 Hector revives and returns to battle like a horse that has broken his bonds; the animal runs over the plain proudly with head held high. This is a picture of a supremely exultant and self-confident stallion, though the surrounding narrative does not talk of emotion. Hector returns to battle swiftly,

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[13] Hampe, p. 21, Snell's Chapter One: "Homer's View of Man," and E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass. 1963), pp. 197-201.

[14] This has often been noted; cf. deVelsen, p. 7, Müller, p. 179, and Coffey, pp. 128-132. Most often the simile in such a scene is justified as the poet's means of expressing what cannot be told in any other available way.

encouraging the Trojans. The listener will, of course, realize the joy of the warrior returning to the field because of the simile; remove the simile and the joy is gone. Yet this simile does not belong in this category, since it provides the emotion rather than emphasizing it explicitly. Appropriate similes occur where the context mentions the inner feeling.

An example of such a simile is 23.598:

> ἰάνθη ὡς εἴ τε περὶ σταχύεσσιν ἐέρση
> ληΐου ἀλδήσκοντος, ὅτε φρίσσουσιν ἄρουραι·
> ὣς ἄρα σοί, Μενέλαε, μετὰ φρεσὶ θυμὸς ἰάνθη.

> But his anger was softened just as the dew on the ears of corn
> when the crop is full-grown and the fields bristle with stalks.
> In such a way, Menelaus, was the heart softened within you.

The joy of Menelaus is firmly grounded in the narrative, since he has brought Antilochus to justice and received his prize. This delight is contained in the one verb ἰάνθη. Following the verb is a simile describing this joy, and finally a line closes the simile binding it again to Menelaus' happiness. A simile, either short or long, so intensifies the narrative description of emotion twenty-seven times in the two poems (*Iliad* 15; *Odyssey* 12). Always the emotion is mentioned in the narrative—either directly before or after the simile, and often in both places.

Homer did not conceive of psychological activity or emotional states in a general way. Such conceptions are the tools of the modern scholar with which he can analyze the abstract patterns in the Homeric poems, but one should always be aware that the poet thought of using the simile when a man was joyful or when he was sorrowful or angry or terrified. The oral poet would have thought of similes as accompanying several explicit emotions in his narrative. Odysseus is joyful to see land after the storm (Od. 5. 394), and Penelope weeps with joy to see Odysseus (Od. 23.233). She weeps in sorrow (Od. 19.205), and Achilles laments over Patroclus (19.366). Agamemnon's eyes blaze angrily with fire (1.104), and Odysseus' heart barks in anger (Od. 20.14). Both Paris and Agamemnon quail in fear (3.33 and 10.5). Whenever the theme of the joyful man, the sorrowful man, the angry man, or the fearful man arose, the basic theme could be elaborated by a simile.

> Perhaps the scene of anger deserves special mention:
>
> his black heart was filled full with rage and his eyes were like a blazing fire
>
> (1.103-4 and Od. 4.661-2)

These two lines describe Agamemnon's anger at Calchas and also the anger of Antinous. Most probably such repeated lines were a traditional way of expressing anger, and the simile was a customary part of these lines. That the comparison of the eyes to fire occurs two more times indicates that when the poet sang of wrath, one alternative was a mention of the glowing eyes in an accompanying simile (19.17 and 366).

There are, then, these two methods of portraying emotion: the direct statement and the simile used to modify specific emotions. In addition, the poet can picture the person's physical acts—tears of joy or sorrow, groans, trembling, sleeplessness, shrieking; the list could be endless. Good examples are the physical manifestations of grief shown by Achilles when he hears of Patroclus' death or the wails of Penelope (18.22 ff. and Od. 4.715 ff.). Often such physical manifestations introduce a simile. The tears of joy shed by Odysseus and Telemachus when they first meet are made more moving by a simile (Od. 16.216). Finally Homer can allow a character to reveal his emotion directly. The speeches of Agamemnon and Achilles in *Iliad* I are angry; the laments of Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen express their sorrow.

One variety of psychological activity which is not precisely an emotion, but is a common occurrence in the poems, is perplexity. A man is confronted with choice and pauses to consider his options.[15] The usual Homeric description is διάνδιχα μερμηρίζων, but a feeling of indecision can also be expressed by a simile. Nestor ponders the proper course of action:

> Just as when the sea surges up high in a soundless wave and gives warning of swift gusts of the shrill wind, but the waves roll neither this way nor that until some settled wind comes down from Zeus, thus the old man pondered with his mind uncertain . . .
>
> (14.16-20)

[15] W. Arend, *Die Typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933), pp. 106-115 analyzes scenes where men must make decisions.

The act of pondering is mentioned in the narrative and only reinforced by the picture of the simile. Three other scenes are handled in the same way. Penelope ponders the fate of her son thinking the thoughts of a trapped lion (Od. 4.791). Later when Penelope speaks to Odysseus disguised as a beggar, she characterizes her doubt and sorrow with a simile about Aedon, the nightingale (Od. 19.518). Odysseus on the night before his revenge mulls over the coming day rolling from side to side (Od. 20.25).

These are Homer's ways of showing several specific human feelings or emotions. In the two poems there are at least four alternative methods. He could state the emotion directly; he could modify the individual theme with a simile; he could describe the character's physical movements; or he could have the character tell his own emotions. The choice of method does not seem based on the narrative value of the event, thus the anger of Antinous is told in the same words as Agamemnon's anger, but the importance of the two angers to the larger narrative is vastly different (Od. 4.622 and 1.104). Achilles' sorrow for Patroclus takes almost all forms but the simile, and yet no other statement of the theme of the warrior mourning for a lost comrade is so basic to the plot. It seems so appropriate that Achilles roll on the ground and defile himself when he is told of Patroclus' death that a simile would be too indirect. Equally the touch of the artist has set the other passages in order; the mark of the true poet is his ability to choose correctly among the available alternatives.

5. *Similes for Variation of Standard Themes*

One of the disadvantages of being the heir to a traditional style of epic with standard characters and type scenes is that the poet must ever devote his attention to varying scenes which are inevitably repetitious. A simile is often used as seasoning to lend diversity to traditional or repeated scenes. There are thirty-one such similes, both long and short (*Iliad* 28; *Odyssey* 3).

A mere listing of objects could be very dull: Homer, however, introduces variety into his lists in many ways, often with a simile. In the catalogue of Trojans a simile illustrates Nastes' folly, and the list of the suitors' gifts to Penelope contains a gold chain with amber beads which are as bright as the sun (2.872 and Od. 18.296).

A modified type of list is the naming of one warrior after another.

While sitting on the Scaean Gate with the Trojan elders, Priam asks about Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Ajax. To vary his questions he uses two similes to distinguish Odysseus (3.196 and 197). When Agememnon inspects the troops, he comes upon Idomeneus, Ajax, Nestor, Menestheus, and Odysseus. To help differentiate the individual groups of soldiers, Idomeneus and Ajax are described in similes (4.253 and 275). In the *Doloneia* Agamemnon goes to wake the Greek heroes. He awakens Nestor, Odysseus, and Diomedes. The armor of Diomedes shines like lightning (10.154), and is thus different from the previous description of Nestor's armor, which had more pieces but only gleamed (10.75-79). In each case there is a series of men all of whom are doing essentially the same thing. As Homer moves from one to the other, he inserts a simile here and there, characterizing each man and distinguishing him from the others, but also rescuing his audience from the tedium of a list of utterly similar objects.[16]

Finally the simile is used to give color to the most common scene in the *Iliad*, the killing of an enemy. As Teucer aims at Hector twice, missing his target both times, he does strike a lesser hero (8.300 ff.). The first time he kills Gorgythion who bows his head to the side like a poppy, heavy with its blossoms and the rains of spring, while the second man, Archeptolemus, merely falls from the chariot. But the two short passages begin in the same way. Compare lines 8.300-1 and 309-10:

> ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἄλλον οϊστὸν ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν ἴαλλεν
> Ἕκτορος ἀντικρύ, βαλέειν δέ ἑ ἵετο θυμός·
>
> Τεῦκρος δ' ἄλλον οϊστὸν ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν ἴαλλεν
> Ἕκτορος ἀντικρύ, βαλέειν δέ ἑ ἵετο θυμός.

The lines are almost the same; the action is almost the same, and yet the scenes are different. The first contains a simile, and the second introduces and motivates a small episode featuring Hector, Teucer, and Ajax. Because scenes of warrior killing enemy are so common, there is no need each time for a close balance with similar opening lines to demonstrate the demand for variation. Almost all scenes of wounding must be supplemented in some way. The dull-

[16] See Arend *op. cit.* (supra, n. 15), p. 22 and 29 ff. for a discussion of variation within these two last scenes.

ness of unaugmented lists of the slaughtered demonstrates the need for diversity (5.677 ff. and 705 ff.).

There are many alternative methods of varying such repeated scenes, as a passage at the beginning of Book 5 demonstrates, 5.144-166. In order, there is an unadorned killing of a pair, a killing of a pair whose father is mentioned, a killing of another pair with a mention of the father's future sorrow, and a killing of a pair accompanied by a simile. The alternatives are too numerous to list. But the poet always had at hand and often used the simile.

In general the many types of lists which appear throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* do not in themselves constitute a theme but rather a technique of composition, a technique deeply rooted in the paratactic mentality of the oral singer.[17] The poet probably never had a general concern about the amount of variety in his poems. Whenever he found himself singing a list, he must have seen in the eyes of his audience and felt almost instinctively that he could not merely repeat item after item without some relief. Such variation is evident in the lists of Yugoslav bards. Salih Ugljanin in *The Song of Bagdad* introduces separately six warriors. The listing technique is evident when he marks the entrance of each hero by singing that the plain thundered, however each time there follows a highly varied description of each warrior.[18]

Yet it is clear that the repetitious killing of a series of warriors one by one occurs often enough in the Homeric poems to be identified as a theme. At moments such as these when the oral poet sang a type of list which was, in addition, a theme of composition, he employed several standard means of variation, among which was the simile. To define the precise motivation for the simile is impossible; it is sufficient to demonstrate that in such passages the simile accompanies either the theme or the technique.

6. *General Scenes of the Armies*

Homer's narrative moves like a series of waves. One short scene comes after another, with a slight pause in between when all individual action fades away and the poet scans the battlefield

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[17] See the general discussion of parataxis in J. A. Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," *TAPhA* 80 (1949), pp. 1-23.

[18] M. Parry and A. B. Lord, *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (Cambridge, Mass. 1954) I, p. 74 ff.

quickly.[19] He looks at the Trojan army, then at the Greek army, and then moves to another part of the battlefield for a new scene with new characters. The course of the fighting after Hector's healing is a clear example.

15. 262-270	Hector returns to battle (simile[20])
271-280	*General scene*: the Greek army is afraid (*simile*)
281-305	Thoas speaks and encourages the Greek heroes to stand
306-311	*General scene*: Trojan army, Hector, and Apollo
312-327	*General scene*: Greek army stands until frightened by Apollo (*simile*)
328-342	List of individual Trojan killings
343-366	*General scene*: Greek army, Hector, Trojan army, Apollo (two similes)
367-389	*General scene*: Greek army, Nestor, Zeus, Trojan army (*simile*), Greek army
390-404	Patroclus and Eurypylus
405-414	*General scene*: Greek army, Trojan army (*simile*)
415-—	Hector and Ajax—individual battles

Between the scenes of individual heroes and individual actions fall general scenes of both armies. The men mentioned by name in these general scenes are agents of the army not engaged in a scene of individual combat. The picture of the Trojan army with Hector and Apollo in the lead is a general picture of the Trojan army and its movement, as it is the scene in which Nestor prays for the Greek army. These thematic scenes may be easily distinguished from the later scenes where Hector and Ajax individually engage in combat killing enemy men one by one. This type of alternation, where a general scene alternates with a scene of individual achievement, is

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[19] Cf. B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden 1968), p. 19.

[20] There are three similes in this section which do not describe groups of men, but they are not the object of interest in this category.

263—The scene opens with the impressive re-entrance of Hector to the battle. Such entrances are often marked with a long simile; see infra, p. 38 ff.

358—The length of the pathway is given by a simile. Similes expressing measurement are common; see supra, p. 20 ff.

362—Apollo scatters the wall as easily as a child scatters sand. Divine action in the human world is usually described with a simile; see supra, p. 24 ff.

common in the war books of the *Iliad.* Very often a simile accompanies the general description of the army with its heroes. There are four examples of such a simile in the lines cited above; there are eighty-six such similes both long and short in the two poems (*Iliad* 82; *Odyssey* 4).

Often the general scene will be a picture of one army fighting a single enemy hero. In the battle over Patroclus' body Menelaus fends off the Trojan army; later Ajax does the same. One is likened to a lion confronting dogs and herdsmen; the other, to a boar scattering the hunters and their dogs (17.61 and 281). At other times the one hero terrifies the enemy army into ineffectiveness, as when Agamemnon rushes through the Trojan ranks at will like a forest fire (11.155) or when the Trojans cower before Achilles like defenceless fish before a dolphin (21.22).

Sometimes such a general picture does not contain a description of each army, rather it is a wide view of the battle, when neither side has the advantage (12.421, 15.410, and 17.389).[21]

The army as a whole is not always merely the background against which the heroes perform their feats. Often it has the additional role of main actor as in Book 2 when the movements of the hordes of Greeks are an essential part of the story. Each time the army as a body acts in this book, there is a simile (2.87, 144 and 147, 209, 394).[22] Later the army sits as do the gods and heroes, and here as an actor it is again described by a simile (7.63).

Although the *Odyssey* is more a poem of single men, there are scenes with mobs of people.[23] As might be expected, these groups are pictured in similes. The suitors flee before Athena like cattle driven by a horse-fly and the herdsmen charge them like vultures (Od. 22.299 and 302). Odysseus comes upon the slain suitors who are fallen in a heap like fish which have been drawn from the ocean

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[21] Fenik *op. cit.* (supra, n. 19), p. 55 f. points to two similes describing groups in a pattern which is repeated within 35 lines (5.493 ff.). He finds the appearance of such doublets in close proximity common in the *Iliad.*

[22] Hampe, p. 9 ff., analyzes the function of the similes characterizing the army in Book 2. He notes the compactness and increased force of the description in a simile: "Hier galt es, ein im einzelnen nicht mehr erfassbares, unübersehbares, in tausendfaltiger Vielheit sich gleichzeitig abspielendes Geschehen festzuhalten" (p. 13). Cf. deVelsen, p. 7, Müller, p. 179, and Coffey, p. 121.

[23] It is noteworthy that these similes occur only in Book 22 where the story is closest to the war scenes of the *Iliad.*

in a net; he, their enemy, sits among them like a bloodstained lion (Od. 22.384 and 402).

There are so many different situations where a mob of people is depicted with a simile; indeed, this is the most common use of the simile. There seems to be no precisely definable alternative. Fortunately the various situations in which such a scene is sung offer such variation in themselves that the lack of a limited list of precise alternatives is not a loss deeply felt.

7. *Summary Scenes before Battle*

There are places in the Homeric poems where an overall view or summary of the various elements in a complicated situation occurs consistently enough to be called a theme of composition. Before a battle the poet often sings a type of review or catalogue. In Books 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 16 of the *Iliad* there is a listing of warriors on one side or the other before the main fighting begins, as in Book 5 there is a preliminary list of the Greek leaders, each of whom kills one man before Diomedes begins his aristeia. In Book 3 it is the series of questions from Priam about the various warriors on the field. In Book 2 stand the catalogues of ships, both Greek and Trojan. One can only speculate on the origin of the catalogue and its inclusion in Greek narrative, yet it is significant that even in the small episodes of past battles which Nestor and Agamemnon relate there is a list of warriors; for example:

> Never have I seen nor shall I see again men like Perithous or Dryas, the shepherd of the people, Caeneus and Exadius and godlike Polyphemus and Theseus, the son of Aegeus, a man like the gods; these were raised as the strongest men on the earth. They were the strongest and they fought with the strongest, the wild beast men who lived in the mountains; and they destroyed them terribly. And I went along with them coming from Pylos . . . (1.262 ff.)

Agamemnon, in shaming Diomedes by recalling the exploits of his father Tydeus among the Cadmeians, lists briefly the names of the individual warriors before the battle even though these names are not very significant in his story (4.391 ff.). It seems that there was a tradition of listing the participants before beginning to

narrate an event like a battle scene, which contained little opportunity for introducing each character as he appeared on the scene.[24] These passages, both long and short, offer a summary view of the army and its leaders before the battle commences. Often Homer adds similes to these scenes. There are twenty-six examples of this use of the simile in the *Iliad*; one in the *Odyssey*.

This striking difference in usage of summary scenes is related to the difference in story-telling between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The basic story of each poem requires its own style of narration. The *Odyssey* is the story of one man and his family. Once the focus is set on Odysseus, he continues as the main character for many books as he confronts a series of challenges. When the action moves to the palace in Ithaca, the characters work out the reinstatement of Odysseus and the punishment of the Suitors in a single setting. The plot of the *Odyssey* depends on single men, each dominating their own sections of the narrative. The *Iliad* contains many characters who cooperate throughout a series of sporadic appearances to advance the story of men and armies. Summary scenes before the beginning of a major action in the *Iliad* aid the audience in fixing the general outlines of the situation in their minds as background.

Perhaps the most detailed example of this theme is the catalogue of ships. From the time that the army of the Greeks is marshalled until the two forces march to battle, there is almost no advance of the plot. The intervening four hundred lines contain an overall picture of the two armies. Within this section of narrative there are no fewer than eleven similes describing the Greek army (2.455, 459, 468, 469, 780, and 781), the Greek leaders as a group (2.474), Agamemnon (2.478 and 480), the Trojan army (3.2), and the appearance of both armies (3.10). This is the proper place to have the most extensive catalogue—the first meeting of the armies in the epic. To make the shorter lists as detailed or to load them so heavily with similes would merely retard the story. Thus when Agamemnon arms, there is a short view of the Greek army and one of the Trojan army with three short similes (11.60, 62, and 66); then the action begins. Or when Patroclus arms, there are only the necessary ceremonies and warnings, three views of the Myrmidons,

[24] For a more precise discussion of the position of catalogues in the narrative see Fenik *op. cit.* (supra, n. 19), pp. 80, 153, 167, and 225.

each with a simile (16.156, 212, and 259), and a short mustering of army and generals, then the action commences immediately. In Book 4 the catalogue is not so short. As Agamemnon goes through the army from hero to hero, similes describe his meetings with Idomeneus and the Ajaxes. Then comes the advance of the endless Greek army and a simile (4.422) followed by the polyglot clamor of the Trojans illustrated by a simile (4.433). In the *Teichoscopia* there are two similes for Odysseus as Priam reviews the Greek heroes.

8. *Entrance of the Hero*

A character's first entrance into the epic narrative can be dramatic and significant like Agamemnon's or Andromache's; or it can be treated as though he were expected to be there and needed no introduction like Patroclus' and Apollo's entrances in Book 1. In later poets the first appearance of a character often reveals character and key imagery,[25] but Homer is not as conscious of this device. As an oral poet he begins his story from a certain point and assumes that all necessary characters are present and functioning even though he has not formally brought them to the scene himself. His attention is focused on the entrance of a character within the story. If a man must be built up for a demanding task or an important role, Homer singles him out from the omnipresent group of available characters and speaks about his ability, his armor, his present activity, or some other detail. But if an unnoticed entrance is aesthetically proper, Homer can introduce a character without fanfare. For example, Priam appears at Achilles' feet unseen by those in the tent and almost unmentioned by the poet as he enters (24.471 ff.). This is not the entrance of a king; and in view of the coming scene with its emphasis on the common bonds of humanity, it should not be.

Homer is highly sensitive to such entrances; one of his common methods of introducing a character into an episode is the simile. When Sarpedon is roused by Zeus to start the breaking of the Greek wall, Homer says that the wall would not have been broken if Sarpedon had not been given strength. To introduce the warrior for this short scene, the poet uses two similes:

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[25] Cf. Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1 ff. and *Oedipus Coloneus*, p. 1 ff. The difference in the same man is immediately striking.

> Never would the Trojans and glorious Hector have broken the gates and long door-bar of the wall if Zeus the counselor had not roused his son Sarpedon against the Argives, like a lion against the cattle with curved horns. . .
>
> Holding his shield in front of him and shaking two spears he went like a lion raised in the mountains. . .
>
> (12.290-293 and 298 ff.)

Entrances of characters into the narrative are described with a simile sixty-nine times in the two poems (*Iliad* 52; *Odyssey* 17) by both long and short similes.[26]

The most common entrance is that of the hero before his aristeia. Diomedes briefly enters the battle three times before he finally begins his aristeia. Athena gives him strength and courage, and his helmet shines like a star (5.5). Then there is a small scene during which Diomedes kills a minor hero Phegeus and takes his horses. Two gods converse, and other Greek leaders kill one man each. Then Diomedes comes into battle again—not forgotten, merely left aside for a flurry of Greek victories to prepare his way, and sweeps across the plain like a flood (5.87). Then he is wounded, cured, and receives instructions from Athena before he finally enters battle for a third time like a lion in his rage (5.136). This passage is a carefully arranged prelude to an aristeia: Greek victories, favor of the goddess with divine instructions pointing ahead in the action, and similes to glorify the hero. Before his aristeia Agamemnon is also ennobled by the magnificence of his armor with a simile in the midst of this description (11.27). But the most elaborate introduction is the lengthy preparation of Achilles. Within the twenty-five lines of his arming four similes describe the gleam of Achilles' shield, helmet, and full armor (19.374, 375, 381, and 398).

Such introductions are also used for lesser events than an aristeia. As Ajax goes to single combat with Hector, his fearsomeness is emphasized by two similes stressing his bigness and might (7.208 and 219). Teucer, who enjoys a minor profusion of successful shots,

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[26] Cf. Hampe, pp. 21-2: "Schliesslich können Gleichnisse dazu dienen, eine übergewöhnliche Steigerung des Formates auszudrücken, nicht nur bei Göttern, sondern auch bei Helden, vor allem bei dem Haupthelden Achill. Dabei sind äussere Grösse und überragende Bedeutung voneinander nicht zu trennen."

is brought to the audience's attention by a simile (8.271). Not always are the trials of war involved. Telemachus is magnified by a simile as he goes to address the council and before he undertakes his trip to Menelaus (Od. 2.5 and Od. 3.468). Menelaus is introduced with a simile before he begins the narrative of his troubles and sufferings in returning from Troy (Od. 4.310). These scenes all portray men who are momentarily set apart from the rest of the army and heroes because they are going to draw the spotlight of the narrative to themselves in undertaking a new and perhaps difficult task. A simile can produce a momentary pre-eminence.

The hero, however need not always have a specific task ahead of him. A simile is employed to bring heroes into prominence on the battlefield, even if they have been there but were unnoticed during a previous scene. In Book 16 of the *Iliad* Patroclus dominates all other characters. When he dies, the fight is reformed about his body and several great heroes re-enter the battle, many with a simile. Menelaus stands over Patroclus like a mother cow, and later Ajax drives Hector away like a lion (17.4 and 17.133). Like a flame Hector, who has stood aside after killing Patroclus, is fired into battle rage and shouts to his comrades (17.88). In the same fashion Paris enters battle with Hector after the peaceful scene with Andromache (6.506, 513, and 7.4).

Figures who have no real effect on the story but are introduced into the narrative and play a role for a single scene often receive a simile. The elders of Troy are important only for the *Teichoscopia*. Astyanax has a part in the Hector-Andromache scene, and the rather housewifely Helen of the *Odyssey* is an interesting addition for the listener who knew the full epic cycle, but beyond their own scenes these characters do not enter the plot. A simile introduces them in these scenes (3.151, 6.401, and Od. 4.122). Even characters in a short narration can be made momentarily larger by a simile, as Iphitus, who gave the bow to Odysseus, and Theseus, a fellow warrior of Nestor, are both like gods (Od. 21.14, Od. 21.37, and 1.265).[27]

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[27] The serving woman in Nestor's tent receives a very complimentary phrase: "like the goddesses" (11.638). This woman plays no significant role in this scene nor in the rest of the *Iliad*. Homer is, however, consciously attempting to stretch out the description of the meal in order to allow time for Patroclus to appear at Nestor's tent and to modulate the pace of the narrative after the battle description (11.613-644). When he introduces a

Finally similes appear with people who have been absent from the narrative, because hindered, and now return. Hector is kept away from Agamemnon by Zeus' command in Book 11 and wounded in Book 14. Each time he is described by a simile as he re-enters battle (11.292, 295, and 15.263). Briseis has been taken by Agamemnon, and when she returns, her reappearance is modified by two similes (19.282 and 286). Menelaus in Book 3 disappears from the narrative when Aphrodite removes his opponent. When he re-enters the narrative, he is described by a simile (3.449).

These examples all show characters coming into the narrative. To introduce them, sometimes to glorify them and sometimes merely to call attention to them, the poet uses a simile. The choice between short or long seems aesthetic. Achilles attracts both before his aristeia, while Diomedes is described only by long similes. Patroclus has none in his preparations.[28]

9. *Withdrawal of the Hero*

Complementary to the theme of the entrance of the hero is the theme of the withdrawal of the hero. Since such retreats usually mark a reversal in the action, the similes which accompany this theme are an attempt by the poet to call attention to an act common in every war story, but with extra significance in the particular context. For example, Zeus tells Hector to withdraw from the battle until Agamemnon retreats. As soon as the pains grow too severe for Agamemnon and he must leave the battlefield, there is a simile (11.269). Immediately Hector re-enters the fight for his fatal day of glory—until the sun goes down. When Hector is wounded by Ajax, the Greeks are free to advance and to drive the Trojans back over the wall and the ditch. They are successful until Hector's return. To emphasize this pivotal loss to the Trojans Homer describes Hector's withdrawal with two similes (14.413 and 414). When Pandarus wounds Menelaus, the treaty is broken and the war continues; a simile is used to describe the wound (4.141). In the battle for Patroclus' body Menelaus makes two significant

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minor character, he may have realized that he had come to a perfectly traditional place for a simile—and, indeed, this small simile would be one other way of lengthening the description of the meal.

[28] Patroclus is in many ways marked as a lesser warrior. Cf. infra Cpt. 4, n. 18.

retreats, both described by similes: Hector takes the arms of Achilles when Menelaus is forced to fall back like an overawed lion and later Menelaus withdraws to start the ominous message of Patroclus' death on its way to Achilles (17.109, 657 and 674).

II. Similes as poetic Technique

1. *Emphasis on Anticipated Meetings*

One of the basic concerns of the oral poet is the proper telling of certain facts, but not all types of facts. The various shields which one warrior can bear in the course of one scene have long since been noted as glaring inconsistencies, yet there are few inconsistencies in the building of the basic plot. Events which are necessary or will later be important are not forgotten. Since the poet must continually guide his audience's sense of his story, he must anticipate and arrange the important meetings. The final battle between Hector and Achilles is foreshadowed throughout the *Iliad*; the regaining of home and family by Odysseus is consistently the goal of the endless toil of the *Odyssey*. Since the poet knew that certain confrontations would take place, he could prepare his audience for them by introducing similes describing the participants as the actual meeting approached. The similes allowed the poet to dwell a little longer on the important characters and, thereby, to heighten the tension by making the audience realize that the critical moment, which they had expected, was near. Athena sends Nausicaa to the beach when Odysseus is sleeping. When all other work is done and she begins to play ball with her handmaids, either the meeting will come before the game is finished or not at all. Nausicaa at the start of this game is set apart from her servants by a simile (Od. 6.102). Then one of the maidens throws the ball into the water; their cry wakes Odysseus who comes out of the bush to this prearranged meeting like a lion (Od. 6.130). Such preluding and emphasizing of anticipated confrontations is accomplished by means of short or long similes thirty-six times in the two poems (*Iliad*, 25; *Odyssey* 11).

When Telemachus returns to Ithaca and goes to Eumaeus' hut, the audience knows that his father is sitting before him. This is a meeting which Odysseus has long desired—his first reacquaintance with family—and Telemachus' entrance is marked by a simile (Od. 16.17). When they embrace one another, there is also a simile

(Od. 16.216). When Penelope meets the beggar and hears his tale, this is the long awaited first meeting; only later does the true recognition take place. But this first meeting contains three similes (Od. 19.54, 205, and 211). This is a type of unfulfilled or unsuccessful meeting, when the awaited confrontation occurs, but there is no decisive outcome. There are other examples of such meetings. Every hearer who knew the causes of the Trojan War must have anticipated the battle between Menelaus and Paris, but when these two meet at the beginning of the third book of the *Iliad*, Paris shrinks back into the army from fear. However since it is a meeting much anticipated by the audience, both heroes are characterized with a simile (3.23 and 33).

The simile can be used in widely separated passages to emphasize and maintain interest in an impending meeting. That Hector and Achilles, each as the great champion of the warring armies, must fight becomes more inevitable as the *Iliad* progresses: first it is rivalry; then it is duty. A confrontation, marked with a simile (20.423), occurs in Book 20, but Hector is saved for the moment by Apollo. Later as Hector stands alone before the walls of Troy and Achilles rushes towards him for their fatal encounter, there are no fewer than eleven similes describing Hector, Achilles, or the appearance of the two. First there are five similes—three for Achilles and two for Hector. Then four similes describing the chase. Finally a simile for Hector's fruitless lunge and one for the fateful spear point which will kill Hector. Exclusive of content the position of the similes alone emphasizes this expected confrontation (22.22, 26, 93, 132, 134, 139, 162, 189, 199, 308, 317).

In the *Patrokleia* a similar meeting occurs. A simile describes the mares of Troy bearing Hector away from Patroclus (16.384). Later Hector and Patroclus fight over the body of Hector's charioteer, Cebriones, which Patroclus stands over like a lion. Hector and Patroclus then fight like two lions in an inconclusive battle which leads back to a scene of general battle (16.752 and 756). Later when Hector delivers the death blow, as expected a simile describes it (16.823).

The battle between Sarpedon and Patroclus contains three similes (16.428, 482, and 487). To what extent this was a rivalry in the heroic tradition is unknown. The poet has presented their meeting as decisive and predicted its outcome in a scene on Olympus, so that the audience would at least anticipate Sarpedon's death

(15.67).[29] Evidence is, however, lacking to state firmly that this was an essential and expected conflict.[30] The battle between Achilles and Aeneas seems to have been a part of the tradition. They had met once before on Mount Ida, where apparently Aeneas fled with no fight. This story is told at 20.187 ff., and because this story is known, there is reason for using a simile at their meeting in Book 20 (164). The battle between Aeneas and Diomedes in Book 5 is built up to such a point that a simile describes Aeneas' movement as he takes his stand before Diomedes (5.299).

In these last three examples it must be remembered that the battle could be in the tradition, anticipated by the audience and the poet, and given poetic color by the addition of similes.[31] Or it could be merely in the poet's mind to make two men the center of interest for a minute, since all men treated with this technique are heroes, not little men who are expendable. The battle is, therefore, an object of interest because of its participants. The addition of a simile could be one alternative method of pairing two well-known heroes and making them focal points for the immediate narrative.

Meetings and confrontations occur throughout both poems, and the alternative means of stressing such meetings are infinitely varied. There are several scenes in which the poet uses a simile or a series of similes to emphasize the coming confrontation of two major figures. Perhaps these meetings were well known from the tradition of epic song, or perhaps the poet wanted to use such figures to center his narrative momentarily. In either case similes make the two characters distinct from other figures in the background and give their meeting importance. The oral poet need only anticipate well-known confrontations before beginning the episode and then plan his alternatives.

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[29] For a discussion of the technique of battle description in this scene see Fenik *op. cit.* (supra, n. 19), p. 204 f.

[30] Sarpedon's background in the *Iliad* is vague. For two contrasting views of his place in the epic tradition see W. Kullmann, *Die Quellen der Ilias* (Wiesbaden 1960), p. 175, n. 4 and W. Friedrich, *Verwundung und Tod in der Ilias* (Göttingen 1956), pp. 103-112.

[31] Evidence for a tradition underlying the battles of Aeneas with Achilles and Aeneas with Diomedes is gathered by Kullmann *op. cit.* (supra, n. 30), pp. 281 f., 301, 326, 342, 368. There seems to be no evidence for such a tradition regarding the Aeneas-Idomeneus confrontation. Cf. also H. Erbse, "Über die sogenannte Aeneis im 20. Buch der *Ilias*," *RhM* 110 (1967), pp. 1-25.

2. *The Joining of two Scenes*

Because oral narrative is inevitably episodic, the poet must tell one episode separately from another while attempting to introduce reminiscences here and there which will not permit the audience to forget the first episode while hearing the second. At this type of juncture in the narrative the poet must impress firmly upon his listeners' mind the picture to which he wishes to refer later; if the scene is sufficiently emphasized, the audience can be expected to remember it. Later the poet is able to return in his song to that scene, and, by joining the present and the previous scenes, present a single unified event. This is one of the few methods an oral poet possesses to present two simultaneous actions. While Antilochus bears his fateful message to Achilles, the battle over Patroclus' body continues. Finally the Greeks under Ajax's command have some success and begin to carry the body back toward the ships, but the Trojans resist firmly, and there is a chance that Patroclus will fall again into their hands. At the end of Book 17 the poet summarizes this scene treating individually Menelaus and Meriones who are carrying the body, the two Ajaxes who are holding off the Trojans, Hector and Aeneas, the Trojan army, and the Greek army. Then the narrative shifts to Achilles' tent for Antilochus' report. Since only one hundred and fifty lines later the poet will wish to return to the battlefield where affairs have not changed substantially, he makes the summary picture at the end of Book 17 a colorful and, therefore, notable scene—one which will be remembered easily by his audience. Thus he can lead back to it after an intervening section of the narrative. Often Homer fills such scenes with similes which permit the poet to dwell upon the scene a bit longer and to call attention to its subsequently important details one by one. There are twelve examples of this use of the simile in the *Iliad*; one in the *Odyssey*.

The scene at the end of Book 17 contains five similes. Almost every item in it except Hector and Aeneas provides a point of comparison upon which a simile is built (17.725, 737, 742, 747, and 755). When the poet returns to this scene, the two protagonists, Hector and Ajax, each are described in a simile (18.154 and 161), a type of small summary to recall the previous situation for the audience. A parallel pattern of summary and recall occurs at the end of Book 15 when the scene is about to switch to Achilles' camp.

The signal for Patroclus' entrance into battle is to be the smoke from a burning ship. The poet describes Ajax' attempts to hold Hector away from the ship, describes each hero with a simile to emphasize the scene, and then returns to it some lines later in Book 16 when Achilles sees the fire from the ships (15.679, 690, and 16.114 ff.). In Book 11 the grudging retreat of Ajax serves to summarize the battle situation before the scene shifts to Achilles standing alone by his ship watching his chances for glory disappear. The fatal weakness of the Greeks will be the subject of the rest of the book and is background for the futile battle around the wall in Book 12. Later when Nestor appeals to Patroclus and tells of the Greek defeat, his words have heightened meaning for an audience which remembers the weakness of the Greeks as symbolized by the picture of the hero Ajax in retreat. Ajax' stubborn withdrawal is described in three similes (11.546, 548, and 558).[32] As the final example, Odysseus, when he falls asleep on the Phaeacian shore, is compared to a coal among embers (Od. 5.488). Then the scene shifts to the palace. Later Homer joins the two scenes when Nausicaa comes to the beach.

3. *Emphasis in Short Episodes*

The poet not only concentrates on the larger story; he must also sustain his audience's interest by singing the smaller scenes well, and essential to this process is proper emphasis on important constituent elements. If all events are sung as though they were of the same significance, the poem would seem repetitiously monotonous, but by shifting emphasis in individual scenes the poet

[32] It could be objected that fighting does follow the retreat of Ajax (11.575 ff.) and that, when the poet returns to the battlefield, there is no mention of Ajax nor the details of the battle situation (12.2 ff.). Consequently there may be no reason to emphasize the particular retreat of Ajax. However the dangerous weakness of the Greeks does underlie the appeal of Nestor, and this weakness is represented in a summary scene by Ajax—a scene made memorable by similes. In addition, the fighting after Ajax' retreat tells of the wounding of Eurypylus. Patroclus' pity is to be aroused by this man (cf. 11.804 ff. and 15.390 ff.), and such pity eventually drives Patroclus to ask Achilles to relent. The similes do fix the thought of Greek defeat. Only against such thoughts do Nestor's appeal and Patroclus' mercy to Eurypylus have full effect. Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Iliasstudien* (3rd ed.; Darmstadt 1966), pp. 17 ff. and 76 ff. Schadewaldt has noted two other examples of this "Klammertechnik" in Books 16 and 18 in "Homerische Szenen," *Die Antike* 12 (1936) 173-201 on p. 181 f. See also infra Cpt. 4, n. 13.

maintains a story which is not only well structured but also entertaining. One means of achieving this variation is highlighting: the thoughtful presentation of a scene with a center of interest around which the minor events arrange themselves. I am speaking here only of shorter scenes in which the audience could appreciate the technique within a single section of narrative. One method of achieving such emphasis is the simile.

The first example is *Iliad* 13.198. This is an outline of the scene which surrounds these lines (169-205):

169	General line
170-181	Teucer kills Imbrius and simile [33]
182-185	Teucer rushes to strip him but Hector stops him
185-187	Hector slays Amphimachus
188-194	Hector rushes to strip Amphimachus but Ajax prevents him and the Greeks take the bodies
195-205	Amphimachus is taken away with his armor and the Ajaxes strip and defile body of Imbrius and *simile* [34]
206——	Start of aristeia of Idomeneus

This small scene of battle is prelude to the aristeia of Idomeneus; as the aristeia of Diomedes is introduced by a scene of Greek victories, so here a scene which shows total, albeit momentary, Greek superiority precedes the hero's entrance. The key to this victory is the stripping of a warrior. Teucer tries to strip the man whom he has killed but fails. Then Hector tries to strip a man he has killed and also fails. After the Greeks take both bodies, the Ajaxes despoil the Trojan. The simile here emphasizes the Greek victory, a proper prelude to a Greek hero's aristeia. To make the insult clear the poet has Ajax Oileus throw the head at Hector's feet.

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33 This is a simile used for variation in a common scene; see supra, p. 31 ff. Similes are very usual in this position. In this passage the simile is accompanied by a description of Imbrius' ancestry and previous life. These are both customary variations in repeated scenes that do not distract from the effect of the simile at 198. That is in an unusual spot and at the obvious end of a scene.

34 See Fenik *op. cit.* (supra, n. 19), pp. 126 ff. and 137 ff. for a discussion of the typical elements in this scene. At 13.195 Homer has underlined the capture of the body to make this scene a meaningful introduction to the aristeia; parallel scenes which mention the capture of the body do not contain the simile.

While threat of stripping a warrior of his armor is a standard part of the slaying of men as is seen frequently in the *Iliad* (13.641, 15.545 and 583, 22.258, the beginning of Book 17, and others), in this small scene Homer has caused one element to stand out from the background in order to give direction to his narrative. It is important to note that Homer by his double use of the stripping motif has provided meaning to the telling of this otherwise traditional scene. The simile only aids in stressing elements which are independently significant within the narrative.

The second example of this use of the simile occurs in the long scene 15.552-590. Hector rekindles the Trojans' spirit while Ajax urges the Greeks. But since Zeus favors the Trojans, there is a small scene to show their might at the moment (568 ff.). Antilochus kills Melanippus and springs upon him to strip off his armor; this spring forward is accompanied by a simile. When Hector rushes up and Antilochus flees without a fight, the retreat is also described with a simile. The scene is closed with another reference to Zeus' insuperable aid to the Trojans. The quick movement forward to gain the glory and prizes of victory and the immediate retreat bear ample witness to the Greeks' helplessness. Again Homer underlines the point of this traditional scene by his similes.

In like fashion the sleeping dogs of Eumaeus are as savage as wild beasts (Od. 14.21), a simile which draws the listeners' attention to them momentarily. In a few lines these dogs will receive Odysseus and gain him the instant sympathy and protection of the swineherd. Eumaeus immediately tells the old beggar of his loyalty to his former master: his master's loss is a sorrow equal to that which he would have experienced if Odysseus had been harmed by the dogs. The poet knows that these dogs are important to the immediate narrative and consequently spotlights them with a simile.[35] In the same way Odysseus emphasizes the garment that Penelope herself gave to him and now recognizes (Od. 19.233 and 234).

I have found only six examples of this usage of the simile, a surprising infrequency when one considers the innumerable times that Homer emphasizes an object by discussing it at length, e.g., the bow of Pandarus, which undergoes a detailing of its ancestry,

[35] Arend *op. cit.* (supra, n. 15), p. 44 f. comments on the various changes which the introduction of the untypical dogs cause in the typical scene, and Whitman 292 mentions the importance of these dogs in delineating the character of Eumaeus.

and the staff of the Achaeans, which is taken back to treehood. That the simile is not used frequently in this way suggests that it usually had a more limited function, namely in accompanying a traditional scene or theme and that the poet generally did not consider the simile outside of the rather circumscribed type of events in which it most often occurred.

4. *Emphasis on Continuing Motifs throughout the Larger Narrative*

In the course of the narrative there are certain pivotal events which have far reaching connections within the larger narrative. These may be occurrences which mark a turn in the development of the plot, or events which must be made prominent because they explain later developments, or themes which provide motivation for the narrative. When the poet sang these scenes, he was careful to provide sufficient detail so that his audience would realize their significance. Often he uses a simile to aid in emphasizing such a scene.

For example, Book 12 opens with a digression on the history of the Greek wall and the goal of the fighting throughout Book 12 is the breaching of this wall. When Hector picks up the huge stone and dashes down the gates of the wall, the fight is won, and the Greeks have only their ships as defence. Homer marks the final breakthrough with two similes (12.451 and 463). One of the most important proofs of Odysseus' identity in Ithaca and a key to his recognition is the bow of Iphitus. When Penelope opens the doors of the storeroom to get the bow, a simile describes their groaning (Od. 21.48). When Odysseus strings the bow and plucks the string to test its firmness, there are two similes (Od. 21.406 and 411).

The simile can also give added stress to an underlying theme which the audience must keep in mind. Achilles' actions in the last part of the *Iliad* are motivated by his debt to his dead companion Patroclus. Homer's audience must not forget the source of Achilles' unquenchable fury. When the twelve Trojan youths are sent back to the ships as the blood price for Patroclus, they are dazed like fawns (21.29).[36] Later Achilles laments the whole night long as

[36] This may seem a forced intrepretation; however, the simile does focus the audience's attention for a moment on the debt to Patroclus (cf. 18.336 f.) and the bloodthirsty rage displayed by Achilles in revenging the death, both vital themes in this section of the narrative. Because these twelve young men

Patroclus' body burns just as a father laments the death of a newly-wed son (23.222). The excess of battle rage which Achilles shows during his aristeia and which he will renounce at the end of the poem would be a type of meaningless madness unless the friendship of the two men were kept in view. Therefore, Homer emphasizes this theme often in the final books of the *Iliad,* twice with similes.

The story of Agamemnon is introduced as a countermotif throughout the *Odyssey.* To stress it, the poet describes the murder of Agamemnon twice and the slaying of his companions once with similes (Od. 4.535, Od. 11.411, and Od. 11.413). The fact that the similes at 4.535 and 11.411 are identical suggests that this simile traditionally accompanied this scene, and yet Homer chose to include the simile in order to call attention to the parallel motif of a family awaiting the return of its father and king.

To spotlight these events and motifs—all of which are closely implicated in the later development of the larger story—Homer uses a simile.

III. Similes in Speeches

In the previous classification of similes, a narrative context has been the determining factor. Some Homeric speeches contain narrative, though most offer personal comment upon a scene. The action does not usually advance in a speech; rather one can learn feelings, reactions, and opinions. There are seventy-three similes both long and short contained in speeches (*Iliad* 42; *Odyssey* 31).

Several of these similes are placed in contexts similar to the ones in which they are found in the narrative. Men who talk about the whole army often use a simile (2.289, 4.243, 5.476, 11.383, and *passim*). Similes are used to illustrate infinite number or speed (2.800 and Od. 7.36). A speaker can express the sense of wonder at something strange with a simile (10.547). But for the most part similes in speeches are comparisons drawn for immediate effect rather than satisfaction of a traditional form; the message of the speaker is clearer with the simile. A comparison can occur in speeches in almost any context. Thetis twice calls Achilles a shoot or a

are not forgotten but are brought forth to be slaughtered on the pyre (23.175), I feel that Homer purposely introduced them in Book 21 with a simile.

tree on an orchard slope (18.56, 57, 437, and 438); Aeneas tells Achilles that he is tired of having them bicker like two women in the street (20.252). Telemachus tells Athena-Mentes that he is as kind to him as a father to a son (Od. 1.308). Instead of being placed traditionally, these similes concisely and pictorially convey the speaker's thoughts and emotions.

For this reason I have not been able to place most of the similes within direct speeches into the previous categories. Those that do fall into a category have been discussed and included in the appropriate group, and those that do not, offer evidence that the simile was always available and often used in a direct speech as an illustrative parallel. The difficulty in categorizing these similes arises from the nature of the Homeric speech—comment rather than action.[37]

Notable exceptions where the placement of similes should correspond to traditional usage are speeches with narrative qualities —the Apologue, Menelaus' story of his return, and Odysseus' tales of his fictional adventures. In such speeches similes are located at the same junctures as in the narrative proper. The principles presented in this study seem to have guided their placement.

Conclusion: The Placement of the Similes

Since the oral poet depends on traditions: a traditional story, traditional diction, traditional scenes, it is only to be expected that one aspect of the oral inheritance concerns the placing of the similes within the narrative. In several locations the simile was a customary alternate method of continuing the tale. For some junctures in the narrative there are sufficient parallels to construct a fairly neat set of alternates, as when a god descends or the action of a divinity is described, there are only three or four ways of singing the scene in the preserved text. Because these junctures coincide with several of the standard themes by which the poet tells his story, the placement of the simile can be described in thematic terms which would be meaningful to the oral poet himself. There are, in addition, four large groups of similes which are joined

[37] W. Moog, "Die homerischen Gleichnisse," *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 7 (1912), pp. 266-302 and 353-371: "Wenn in den Reden weniger Gleichnisse sind, so ist das dadurch bedingt, dass sie wenig aüssere Handlung bieten, an die sich Gleichnisse anknüpfen lassen könnten" (278).

to poetic techniques employed repeatedly by the poet. These similes allow the poet to emphasize certain details of a traditional scene which might, without the addition of the simile, go unnoticed by the Homeric audience. When the simile is used with certain traditional poetic procedures, it is difficult to isolate alternatives because the placement of the simile is involved far more with the larger movement of the total passage than with the immediately surrounding context. Since patterned situations and poetic needs recur, parallel procedures can still be defined even if the definition is not as precise as the identification of narrative themes.

The choice between alternatives depended mostly on the poet's desires within the individual episode and calculations of importance to the major plot of either epic were usually passed by. The poet chose an alternative because he found it an effective way of composing the immediate scene. When the poet reached one of several types of junctures in composing a theme or developing a traditional passage where he had to make a choice in order to continue his narrative, the simile ran through his mind. Why the simile only accompanied certain themes and poetic procedures and not others, is unknown—possibly unknowable. Similes are not used to emphasize hysteron-proteron structures or the preparation and serving of dinner, and yet the first is a common technique while the second is a standard theme in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Yet when the poet came to certain limited groups of junctures, he knew that the simile could be effectively employed provided that the scene would permit the momentary distraction and elaboration of a simile.

An important piece of corroborative evidence for this method of composition is offered by the seven sets of repeated long similes. These occur in the following locations: 5.782 = 7.256, 5.860 = 14.148, 6.506 = 15.263, 11.548 = 17.657, 13.389 = 16.482, Od. 4.335 = Od. 17.126, Od. 6.232 = Od. 23.159. The similes at 11.548 = 17.657 are identical but for the initial two lines; the remaining similes range from two to six lines and are duplicates. Such sets of similes are significant in two ways.[38] First, the repeated simile is an alternative that was used twice, rather than once. If

[38] In drawing conslusions from the phenomenon of repeated long similes, I am momentarily assuming that they were sung as blocks of lines which were somehow retained as units or partial units in the poet's mind. See Chapter 5 for discussion of the repeated similes and the various theories which have been advanced to explain them; infra, pp. 127-140.

more oral epic remained, there might be similes found which were repeated three times or even ten times. Though there are, in fact, no similes repeated more than once, those similes that are repeated offer evidence that at least some were units which could be placed freely here and there by the poet without affecting their content. This statement supports the initial insistence on the separation of context and content which underlies this study. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that without exception repeated similes occur within the same context group. Not only is the simile in general a structural unit, but also the tradition suggested one specific simile unit at certain repeated junctures. For example, Paris and Hector are likened to the same proud stallion, and in each case the simile accompanies the entrance of the warrior to the battlefield. As the poet pondered the alternative ways of continuing his song, he chose this particular horse simile twice. The pattern of seven repeated similes each in a limited context is evidence that some similes were alternatives in certain very specific scenes. In each of these scenes there was a very limited and defined number of alternatives given by the tradition, so limited that there are several occasions preserved in the text where the poet chose the same alternative. Repeated passages are far from peculiar to the similes. There are similar repetitions in numerous other types of scenes; for example, scenes where a warrior dies or arms.

There are two conceptions about similes which should be re-examined in the light of the tradition which guides their placement. Fränkel has criticized his predecessors for insisting on the distinction between narrative and simile. He produces examples where the two combine into a unit which cannot be separated without damage to the story.[39] However, if Homer's method of composition is based on a choice between alternates, the simile must be independent from the narrative at least in conception. The poet can make whatever connections he chooses to the story, but he is not bound to do so. Perhaps when he has finished singing the simile, he realizes that it has in itself carried the action into the future, making the bald repetition of the original point of connection unnecessary, though this was probably not in the poet's mind when he chose to sing the simile. His choice was between a *simile* to illustrate the

[39] Fränkel, p. 5 ff.

scene which he has just finished or *narrative* to continue with the story. The simile as a unit was distinguished sharply from the narrative.[40]

There is also a tendency to identify two quite different types of similes: the short comparisons and the long descriptive similes. If the simile is a traditional element in certain scenes or is one of the normal alternatives, this distinction is probably deceptive. The poet's urge to include a simile would be satisfied equally by a long simile or by a short comparison.[41] In either case the simile would have been formally introduced. For aesthetic reasons the poet may extend it or may check it after a few words; essentially the poet chose to include a simile and this desire was fulfilled by the simile unit, be it long or short. In fact, the long simile was often constructed merely by the addition of extra clauses to a shorter simile. Long similes do not seem different in nature from short similes, only in the method and the length of extension.

Some similes in this study fall into two groups. Though often it is impossible to distinguish exactly the context which suggested the use of the simile to the poet, it is only necessary that one context give the simile its roots in order to show the traditional nature of the simile's location. In an actual performance both could have occurred to a singer. There are only a few similes which do not fall easily into categories, which is to be expected. In the *Iliad* five per cent do not; in the *Odyssey*, six per cent, low figures considering that there are 476 similes considered in this study.

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[40] Further proof for this point can be found in places where the simile goes on beyond the action of the narrative. At 16.156 the Myrmidons are compared to wolves. By the time the simile is developed, the wolves have slain, eaten, and are now gorged, while the Myrmidons are still merely eager to begin battle. The simile has been developed as an individual picture to show the hungry, bloodthirsty, animal-like desire of the Myrmidons for war. Once the poet began the picture, it became in itself the immediate concern—rather than the establishment of a neat balance with the narrative events or a continuation of the story. The simile was an independent picture. Cf. Fränkel, p. 73 ff.

[41] Such an attitude is fully in accord with the practice of oral singers as reported by A. B. Lord, *op. cit.* (supra, n. 1), p. 98: "We are apparently dealing here with a strong force that keeps certain themes together. It is deeply imbedded in the tradition; the singer probably imbibes it intuitively at a very early stage in his career... He avoids violating the group of themes by omitting any of its members... we shall see that he will even go so far as to substitute something similar if he finds that for one reason or another he cannot use one of the elements in its usual form."

Traditions in the ancient world are hard to define even when the evidence is largely present. Given that the remains of early Greek epic are so small, it is a testimony to the strength and consistency of the tradition that it can be defined at all. That the simile should come into the poet's mind at a limited number of contexts can only be explained as the result of singing song after song for many years. His practices and customary associations were developed at least partly by the poet himself but, I imagine, came mostly from the oral phrases and techniques of story-telling which had been developed by generations of oral poets through a method which must have been close to trial-and-error. It is in this sense that the placement of the simile is highly dependent on the inherited tradition which the poet had acquired from his earliest years as a listener, an apprentice, and finally a performer.

The singers must ever ponder alternatives. Tradition is a pathway already taken by many, and the common vistas and familiar structures on the way have been seen by all travellers before. The oral artist walks where he can find the best view of the finest familiar sights with imagination and choice as his constant companions. A selection from the old and the new, from the great and the small, from the sophisticated and the plain makes a satisfying and stimulating journey. The route remains the same for all and the sights do not change; selection and emphasis are the keys to the artist's ability.[42]

[42] The results of this chapter are summarized in Column One of the table in the Appendix.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TRADITIONAL POET II: THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE SIMILES

Once the singer has chosen to sing a simile, he must find a subject. Within the contexts where a simile is customarily used the subject matter is diverse. The journeys of gods are variously described by night, mist, snow, birds, and thought with similar diversity in the other contexts. How did an oral poet decide to sing about night in one place and about hawks and doves in another? The subject was not determined in the initial choice to sing a simile but most probably by the immediate narrative situation.

Such a conclusion would not do violence to our basic understanding of the oral tradition as it was handed down to Homer; rather it would enhance our knowledge. There seem to have been large families of simile subjects from which an oral poet could draw various images. These were not absolutely fixed but were basic scenes which could be adapted to different narrative contexts. The test of the good poet was the proper selection of subject and his facility at adaptation.

An examination of the similes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is then in order to see whether certain narrative situations did not suggest specific subjects for similes, or at least restrict the poet's choice. As in the preceding chapter a temporary limitation must be placed upon the beauty, unity and variety of the individua similes. Such a momentary restriction will focus attention on the precise object of inquiry, the choice of the subject matter. The snarling lion who unflinchingly feeds on a cow while dogs and men crowd about him, the slinking lion who creeps wounded through the farm buildings panicking the sheep, and the starving lion who greedily devours a stag's carcass—these three lions are highly individual creations. They sit admirably in the narrative; they lend it life and color. But for the analysis proposed in this study it is necessary to separate sharply the developed simile from the subject matter. All three of these very distinctive beasts are essentially lions and must for the moment be deprived of their individual

personalities, since interest must be unswervingly directed at the context and the subject which it suggested to the poet.

The evidence of the poems themselves is the only source for this study. There are at least two obstacles against reaching unshakeable conclusions on such limited testimony:

1. First is the natural bias of the poems toward scenes of war. Similes are far more numerous in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey* and seem to cluster in the war books. This may have been true of the whole epic tradition, but that cannot be substantiated. In any case most similes must be judged in contexts of warrior and army when they might apply equally well to one man and his friends in a scene of peace. Such flexibility can be demonstrated when the same subject occurs in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But when it cannot be shown so neatly, any conclusions will inevitably have more application to war contexts. For the most part only the simile as applied to a war scene can be examined in any depth.

2. Second, certain subjects which may be quite frequent in the tradition may not fit into a war context. A subject which was common in the epic repertoire but which was represented only once in the *Odyssey* could seem a unique, new and perhaps baffling item.

The remarks made by H. Fränkel on the point of contact between narrative and simile should not be forgotten. Since the simile as a whole is inserted into the narrative, no one narrative item is being compared to one particular item in the simile; but other characters, movements, sounds, setting, and tone—all of these may enter into the comparison. There may be only a few elements mentioned in any single simile, but the oral poet sees the full background: landscape, buildings, and other people, while he emphasizes those details of the picture which are most appropriate for telling his story. Fränkel takes an example from the similes of shepherds and their herds. When the poet startles the modern reader by jumping from the herd to the shepherd within one simile, he is making a very natural connection, because when the Homeric poet thought of a herd, the shepherd was in this mental image as a standard component of a familiar picture. The Homeric audience would also have visualized this figure; the leap felt by modern

critics would be no leap at all for the man practiced in the techniques of oral poetry, be he performer or listener. Consequently a simile which is classified as a member of the lion-boar family can begin with a phrase other than: "just as a boar comes from a thicket . . ."; a simile which starts, "just as dogs and eager boys rush around a boar who comes from a thicket . . .," would be in the same family. The basic picture is the same; the connecting phrase merely introduces the picture. In ascertaining subject matter the formal method of joining simile to narrative is not a trustworthy guide.[1]

The procedure followed in this chapter requires grouping the members of a simile family together and listing the contexts in which such similes occur. There is evidence for at least sixteen families in the Homeric poems.

1. Lion Similes

Lions and boars, which are the subject of the most extensive family of similes in both Homeric poems, describe warriors almost exclusively. The *Iliad* is a story of warriors, but the hero of the *Odyssey* must also fight the suitors to win back his wife, his home, and his kingdom. Probably lion and boar similes are so numerous because they fit the extensive war narrative so well, though there were almost certainly other families which cannot be traced with equal ease because they simply are not suitable descriptions of battle scenes.

In this family of similes lions are freely interchanged with boars. Both Hector, who in returning to battle frightens the Greek army, and Ajax, who strides to the front of the battle line to rally the Achaeans, cause fear in the enemy:

> Just as when dogs and men who live in the country chase after a horned stag or a wild goat, and a high rock and a shadowy forest have saved him and it is not their lot to find him, but at their clamoring a bearded lion appears in the road and suddenly turns them all back in spite of their eagerness; thus the Greeks for a while followed all together in a crowd, jabbing with their swords and two-edged spears, but when they saw

[1] Fränkel, p. 7 ff.

> Hector ranging the ranks of men, they were afraid, and all their spirit sank down to their feet.
>
> (15.271-80)

> He (Ajax) strode through the front fighters like a wild boar in his bravery who easily scatters dogs and vigorous young men, turning upon them in the valley.
>
> (17.281-83)

Hector is compared to a lion who terrifies the hounds and hunters; Ajax, to a boar who swiftly scatters the pursuing hounds and hunters wherever he turns. The action within the simile is the same: a lion or boar drives away dogs and men, and the situation in the narrative is the same: a single hero confronts and terrifies the warriors massed against him. The animals, the lion and the boar, could be switched, and the scene inside the simile would remain unaltered. These are merely two examples of the interchangeable qualities of lions and boars; in almost every case there is a boar simile which presents the same picture as each lion simile except for the animal involved. In addition, there are five similes in which the animal is stated to be either a lion or a boar; for example:

> As when a boar or a lion exulting in his strength wheels about among dogs and hunters, and closing themselves into a wall they stand against him and hurl many javelins; but his proud heart does not fear nor does he flee and it is his boldness which kills him; and often he turns about testing the lines of the men; wherever he charges, the men give way—thus Hector going through the crowd rallied his companions . . .
>
> (12.41-49)

Such passages suggest that groups of similes centered about a single subject, one group describing lions and one, boars, are equal in poetic value and contribution to the story. Since the characters in various similes can be transposed, and since similes presenting both subjects as alternatives exist, the poet does not seem to have made a sharp distinction between the two. The two groups are, in fact, one family named after their most common member, the lion similes.

There is one scene in which the two beasts cannot be transposed. Both lions and boars can scare their opponents, stand steadfastly,

fight and die; but lions kill and stalk other animals, while boars do not. When a hero kills and is described by a simile of the lion-boar family in which an animal kills, the simile is about a lion (5.161, 10.485, 11.113, 11.172, and *passim*). At 11.324 a boar is most like a warrior who kills, but he never actually does kill. The slaughter performed by the lion is an added note of gruesomeness which can color a scene with heroic might and ferocity. The lion can even kill when the man does not. Diomedes has the rage of a lion that strews dead sheep throughout the farmyard, but Diomedes is only returning to the battle (5.136). Hector is like a lion who slaughters many cattle and yet Hector himself slays only one man (15.630). Killing makes these scenes more bloody, and in the narrative there is justification for a strong simile since Diomedes is about to embark on the main part of his aristeia. Hector is about to overcome the fixed Greek battle lines with the intent of burning the ships; though a few lines earlier the Greeks were like firm-fixed crags against the waves (15.618), in this simile they have become defenseless and dying cattle. Because the slaughtering lion is the strongest simile of the family, it is used when there is need of an especially impressive or bloody tone to a scene.

Because the subject of lions and boars is so extensive and so flexible in the similes, it probably had a long ancestry, perhaps back to Mycenaean times.[2] The lion's way of life as a stalker of food and a menace pursued by farmers is the subject. His ferocity in attack, tenacity in pursuit, and swiftness in escape, his hunger and fury—all these activities and qualities are in the similes. In addition, he is shown with various opponents—cattle, sheep, stags, goats, dogs, and men. In one simile a lion and boar struggle against one another. Varied actions against so many varied opponents create a highly flexible system, yet the situations are simple and repetitive: the lion as hunter or hunted.[3] The stress is easily shifted to fit the conditions of the surrounding narrative.

[2] There are lions represented in Mycenaean art: cf. dagger blades and the gold rhython, S. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae* (London 1960), pp. 95-97 and 101; also Plate 146, a figured stele (No. 1427) from the shaft graves. The subject surely existed in early artistic representations; for the dissimilarity of treatment in the similes, however, see Shipp, p. 213 ff. The subject could still be quite old while the Homeric formulation is more recent. And, of course, some lion similes belong to general scenes from nature and are, therefore, ageless and undatable.

[3] The scenes are so similar and repetitive that D. Mülder, *Die Ilias und Ihre Quellen* (Berlin 1910), pp. 328-333, argues that all lion similes derive from one

The lion similes occur, naturally enough, in war contexts usually describing one warrior against a hostile group. Whether the lion is pursued or pursuer depends on the hero's situation in the battle. One context contains similes of lions eager for attack and plunder, as when a warrior arms or attacks in battle rage, he may be compared to a hungering lion craving prey. Idomeneus arming for battle, Diomedes returning to fight, and Sarpedon roused by Zeus against the wall—all rush eagerly to attack; all are likened to lions (4.253, 5.136, and 12.299). A development of this type of simile in the picture of Achilles sorrowing over the dead Patroclus like a lion deprived of his young (18.318). The lion grieves and then tracks the hunter for revenge; in parallel fashion Achilles promises to avenge Patroclus' death immediately after the simile. This is the birth of a new wrath which does not die until the return of the body to Priam; consequently the lion comparisons are used even as he is accepting ransom from Priam (24.41 and 572). When one man stands out in battle ready to fight, he is like a lion in his confidence; in such a way Idomeneus awaits Aeneas and Ajax stands over Patroclus' body (13.471 and 17.133). The lion's behavior can describe the warrior's emotion. He may rage (20.164); he may be confident (5.299 and 12.41);[4] he may take joy in the thought of battle (3.23); or he may retreat reluctantly (11.548 and

basic story. This is probably oversimplified. First, since the whole story which he reconstructs is never given in full and the lion similes do not fall neatly into a story line, he is only assuming that such a story existed. Second such similes as 11.474 do not seem to fit Mülder's basic plot since this lion is merely wandering in the woods. 18.318 is so far removed from the essential story that it is better seen as a description from nature, though there is no need to postulate an independent nature narrative.

[4] Sometimes the motion of a lion is compared in the simile and sometimes the spirit. The clearest example of almost total disregard of the narrative in order to convey the spirit is 12.41. Murray, pp. 245-249 pointed out the incongruity of the simile in which Hector is simply not in the same situation as the lion. A. Shewan, "Suspected Flaws in Homeric Similes" in *Homeric Essays* (Oxford 1935), p. 224 f., states that this simile illustrates Hector's vigor but also his helplessness. I have pointed out supra, p. 59 f. that there is no need for even the most important facts to correspond between simile and narrative; the lion in the simile kills when the warrior does not. At 16.156 the Myrmidons arm like wolves, then suddenly they are wolves who have already killed and sated themselves. In both cases several facts of the simile disagree with the narrative, though the emotion conveyed is apt. Perhaps a better craftsman could have balanced all the factual elements and, in addition could have effectively created an emotional tone in the simile which was like that in the narrative. While Homer as an oral poet does surprisingly well in matching facts, he almost never fails in matching emotions.

17.657). The warrior does the same. Twice physical appearance is given. Automedon and Odysseus, the warrior victorious over the suitors, are like blood-spattered lions (17.542 and Od. 22.402).

There are also eight lion similes in passages where two or more warriors fight or are prepared to fight (5.554, 5.782, 10.297, and others).

I am neglecting for the moment the similes at Od. 4.791 and Od. 6.130 because they do not seem a part of this traditional usage except in the broadest way; they can be more appropriately explained in the next chapter where the use of certain similes as motifs is discussed.[5]

When one warrior stands out, either in the thick of the battle or ready to fight or manifesting the emotions of a warrior, Homer often compared him to a lion. The context suggested the subject matter. Warriors—fighting or ready to fight—occur so frequently in the *Iliad* that the poet undoubtedly knew many ways to describe them and develop their actions within a scene. It is noteworthy that books which do not describe war generally have no lion similes, since these are the contexts in which a lion simile would be inappropriate. Much of the *Iliad* describes war, and in these passages a lion simile can be aptly used.

2. Wind and Sea Similes

The wind and the sea seem natural images for the people of the Aegean sea basin. Perhaps tales about the return of the Greek heroes from Troy introduced such images into the epic tradition: Poseidon, as king of the sea, hindered Odysseus by stirring up a storm of wind and waves which splintered his raft and threatened to drown him, and Menelaus tells Telemachus of many men's adventures at sea. These two elements of nature are the subject of a series of similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In this series both need not be present. Some similes describe only the wind or a storm and some tell of the wind on dry land while others speak only of waves rolling on the sea. But the connection between the behavior of the waves and the gusts which blow over them would have been only too clear to a race of men who often turned to the sea; indeed, several similes join wind and wave into one picture. In

[5] Infra, p. 120 ff. See also infra, p. 90 f.

addition, each type of simile occurs in the same context. The noise of a mob can be like a large wave breaking on a beach, the wind shrieking amid the tree tops, or a wave driven by the stormy blast of the north wind (2.209, 14.398, and 14.394). In the last passages the similes are offered as alternatives in a "neither-nor" sequence: "not so loud is the wave . . ., not so loud is the fire . . ., nor so loud is the wind . . ., as is the cry of the Trojans and Achaeans." Finally wave and wind are equal alternatives in Book Two:

> And the assembly was stirred like the huge waves of the Icarian sea which the east wind or the south wind has raised rushing down from the clouds of father Zeus. As when the west wind in swift gusts moves through a deep corn field, and the ears of corn are bent down, thus was the whole assembly moved . . . .
> (2.144-149)

Both tests for a family grouping are satisfied: wind similes can be used in the same context as wave similes, and they are used as equal alternatives in a pair of similes.

In the case of the lion similes such substitution was more precise because a boar can frequently fill exactly the same role as a lion. However the sea acts in a thoroughly different fashion from the air. A simile which begins, "just as the wind or the wave . . ." is impossible because these two subjects cannot be well presented as interchangeable forces within the same simile. Two separate similes placed side by side modifying the same scene are the closest possible example of substituting wind for wave as a subject.

The occasion for wind and sea similes usually involves groups of people. The Trojans follow Hector like a tempest blast, the two armies clash as two winds clash, and the Trojans pour over the wall as a wave which pours over the rail of a ship (13.39, 13.334, and 15.381).[6] The similes can emphasize the movement of a group,

[6] The difficulty in drawing a sharp line of distinction between related contexts is never more evident than at 13.334 ff. and 16.763 ff. In each case it is clear that there is motion involved and, consequently, a wind simile seems appropriate; and yet the impression left by the scene is one of battle, which would usually call for a lion simile or a fire simile. I have no intention of arguing that the classifications of simile families will be completely rigid or applicable without exception in an oral poem; my arguments and classifications are based on the clearest evidence offered by a large percentage of examples.

chaotic and indecisive as the wind whips ears of corn in a cornfield in bobbing disorder, or disciplined and purposeful like the endless lines of waves which break against the coast (2.144 and 4.422). On the other hand a stubborn resistance to movement is described when the wind stops blowing or a rock stands against the waves (5.522 and 15.618). The basic picture has probably been sung many times before, and therefore the poet needs only to focus on the element which matches his narrative. The noise of groups can be set forth in the simile (2.209, 2,394, and 14.394). Confusion and distress are made visual in the wave that casts seaweed along the beach, and terror is shown by the sailors who scarcely survive in a sea storm (9.4 and 15.624). Joy and relief fill the hearts of exhausted rowers when fair winds finally blow just as the Trojans are bolstered by Hector and Paris (7.4).

When a wind simile describes a single warrior, it emphasizes the force of his attack. Hector returns to battle after Agamemnon's wounding like a wind storm (11.297 and 11.305). Nestor describes his youthful ability in battle as like a whirlwind (11.747). When Nestor is confused by the rout of the Greeks, he is like a rolling sea before the storm breaks (14.16), a simile which may have occurred to the poet by analogy to scenes where the whole army is confused or terrified (9.4 and 15.624).

There are similes which contain a reference to wind and yet cannot be considered wind similes. Ares is a darkness which arises after heat when a wind begins to blow (5.864). Surely the poet is thinking of Ares as that darkness, and the wind is a natural part of the developed picture. This could well have been a short simile: like a black darkness, but the poet chose to carry his description further with other elements which usually and quite naturally accompany such a darkness. Similar is 4.275.

There are also similes where the wind sheds mist over a mountain peak or scatters chaff (3.10 and 5.499), and in both cases a troop of warriors is raising a cloud of dust. The simile does appear with the mention of a group; however, because the dust cloud is in the narrative, I am inclined to think that the visual image in the narrative suggested the subject for the simile. The same is true of 23.366. One can compare 13.334 where the dust cloud is not in the narrative but is one element in a developed picture of gusty winds. When an object, movement, or sound in the narrative reminds the poet of a simile subject, the tradition plays a smaller role since

more immediate features of the narrative dominate the singer's thoughts. There is a whole class of similes related to their contexts in this way which will be discussed later.[7]

Comparisons to wind and sea often occur when the poet describes groups of warriors. As he develops the simile, he is able to vary the components of the picture to characterize the noise or the movement or the specific emotions of this group. The uses of this family for the single warrior, however, seem restricted; they describe only the forceful attack of the fighter. Perhaps because the lion similes had been at hand for so long, they were the most adequate and, therefore, customary means of presenting the warrior's varied movements and moods, while wind similes are the most fully developed set of similes for describing the army as a whole.

Since general scenes of the army provide one of the traditional locations for placing a simile, it is understandable that wind similes often appear in this position. The theme of general scenes of the army should suggest not only the placement but also the subject matter of the simile. A brief scanning of the chart in the Appendix will support this expectation (for example, 2.144, 147, 209, 394, 5.499, 5.522, 7.63, and many others). Yet this coincidence of placement and subject is not consistent, since the choice of the placement and the choice of the subject matter were two distinct choices. There are several similes describing the activities of the army whose subjects are lions or fire. These subjects belong to their own simile families appearing in defined contexts. When the poet found himself singing about the army and decided that the simile—which was one of his standard alternate methods of continuing his song—was the appropriate next step, he then made a second decision concerning subject matter which was utterly independent of the first decision on placement. As he had been guided by his inherited tradition in deciding what the normal ways of continuing his narrative were, so also he was often guided by the tradition in choosing subject matter. If he wanted to talk about the movement of the army (its retreat, advance, or steadfastness), its specific emotions (confusion or relief), or the din of battle, he would often use a wind simile. If he wanted to say that the army was confronting one warrior and giving way before him, he would choose a simile about a lion or a fire. If he were telling his audience that the army's

[7] Infra, p. 81 ff.

fighting was fierce and furious, he would again use a simile of a fire. It is important to note that the poet did have two separate choices to make, placement and subject. Throughout the various simile families there are further examples which demonstrate the need for two separate choices on the part of the oral poet, even though the two choices may often have been made simultaneously. In these passages there are several sets of alternatives for each choice but no ascertainable conjunction of any one alternative placement with any one alternative subject.

The traditional connection of wind similes to specific contexts is evident in two sets of lines following a simile and joining it back to the narrative:

ὣς ἐδαΐζετο θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν (9.8 and 15.629)
ὣς Δαναοὶ Τρῶας μένον ἔμπεδον οὐδὲ φέβοντο (5.527 and 15.622)

Each time a wind simile is joined to the narrative with identical words. In the first set of lines the Greeks are confused and distressed, while in the second, the Greeks stand against the Trojans. Each context, identical in words but located too far apart to be a conscious reminiscence, individually suggested a wind simile to the poet.[8]

3. Fire Similes

Of the four or five large families of similes, those depicting fire and fiery bodies—stars, moon, sun, and lightning—occur frequently in both poems. Earthly fire is never directly joined in one simile with the fire of a star or a lightning bolt where one is an alternative for the other; there is no simile beginning, "as a star or a forest fire . . ." Achilles' armor gleams like shining Hyperion, the sun, while the armor of the marching Greek forces blazes like a fire on a mountain peak (19.398 and 2.455). That similar narrative moments can suggest to the poet both fire and stars images, though, indicates that such similes were interchangeable in the poet's mind. When a helmet or shield gleamed, ready comparisons to fire or a star were at hand.

There is a reasonable limitation on interchanging fire and star

[8] Because of the oral poet's customary repetition of the same words in similar situations, I would disagree with Jachmann's criticism of 5.527. He feels that 5.527 is interpolated from 15.622; G. Jachmann, *Der Homerische Schiffskatalog und die Ilias* (Köln und Opladen 1958), p. 285 ff.

similes. The destructive might of a forest fire can exemplify the rage of the warrior, while a star is a distant fire which does not destroy but rather shines night after night in its cold beauty. Star similes would be senseless comparisons for the warrior in his bloody sweep across the battlefield, but in all other cases these two subjects are interchangeable.

Fire similes occur in three basic contexts—gleaming objects, warriors in battle, and anger. The examples of shining armor —helmets, shields, spears, breast plates—run throughout the *Iliad*, but other items have a fiery gleam as well. The palace of Alcinous is built of bronze walls with golden doors and silver doorposts; gold and silver dogs guard the doors. The whole palace shines like the sun or the moon (Od. 7.84). Menelaus' palace at Sparta possesses the same glow (Od. 4.45). Four robes shine like stars—Hecuba's peplos and Helen's, Odysseus' cloak, and Penelope's shroud for Laertes (6.295, Od. 15.108, Od. 19.234, and Od. 24.148). Similar is Hera's veil (14.185). The chain of Eurymachus is gold and amber —bright as the sun—and the spot on a horse's head is round and white like the moon (Od. 18.296 and 23.455).

Second, warriors in battle are compared to fire. Hector makes the connection most directly when he says that he will fight Achilles even if Achilles' hands are as fire and his fury as iron (20.371). Such images, ranging from short phrases to developed similes of fire, whirling wind, and flaming forests, are restricted to the predominant heroes. Agamemnon and Achilles burn across the field of battle during their aristeiai (11.155; Achilles, 20.490, 21.12, and often). Idomeneus in his momentary burst of glory and Hector as the general of the Trojan army both fight like flames (13.330; Hector, 11.62, 15.605, and often). Similes of destructive fire seem most apt when applied to the triumphant warrior in his unconquerable might. They describe the general appearance of the warrior on the battlefield (i.e., "his rage was like a fire . . ." or "his might was like a fire . . .") or the continuing battle success of the warrior (i.e., "he followed after them like a fire" or "he led them like a fire").

Whole armies are likened to fires most often when they are moving into battle. After the Catalogue of Ships the land is swept with fire as the Greeks march forth (2.780). They follow after Hector and join battle like destructive fires (13.39, 14.396, and 17.737).

Finally, the inner fire of anger glares in the eyes. Agamemnon's eyes are like blazing fire when he upbraids Calchas for his tactless but true advice (1.104). Antinous with fire in his eyes chafes under Telemachus' newly-won independence (Od. 4.662). Achilles glares as he sees the arms of Hephaestus, and again as he prepares for battle (19.17 and 366). By analogy Achilles says that anger swells in the hearts of men like smoke (18.110).

If a simile family and its usual context were well known to the audience and were firm parts of the previous tradition, it was possible for the poet to extend the comparison to new contexts. An example is the simile describing Odysseus on the beach. Previously Odysseus was described in a lion simile from the warrior world (Od. 4.335). On the beach he is like a fire; but this is not the bright and violent blaze which levels the forest, and Odysseus is not the rampaging warrior who terrifies the enemy. He is an exhausted homeless wanderer; and as he sleeps, he is that small seed of fire which can only glow to reveal its weakened power. The destructive potential is there but ebbs for the moment (Od. 5.488).

Once Astyanax is "like a fair star" (6.401). The comparison is unique in the Homeric corpus. It seems to be a mark of quality.[9] Nestor is astounded at the beautiful horses of Rhesus and calls them rays of the sun (10.547). The cloaks, jewels, and palaces which gleam like celestial bodies are all very fine. This simile is a common comparison and could have easily come to the poet while composing as a means of directing attention to Hector's son in this tender scene.

Not all fire similes fall neatly into these three categories. For example, the groans of Agamemnon which come as often as Zeus' lightning have long defied commentators (10.5). Yet with few exceptions the similes whose subject matter is fire, stars, sun, moon, and lightning appear in these three basic situations.

4. Gods and Goddesses

In the Homeric poems men are compared to gods in conjunction with two basic themes: warriors preparing to attack or attacking and characters entering or reentering the narrative. When a warrior is preparing to do battle, he often strides forth like a god. The most

[9] Cf. Snell, p. 196 ff.

impressive is Agamemnon as the leader of the Greeks when they have drawn up into ranks for the Catalogue of Ships. He is compared to Zeus, Ares, and Poseidon (2.478). Ajax, when he readies himself to fight Hector, and Achilles reentering the war and later approaching his single combat with Hector are both likened to Ares (7.208, 20.46, and 22.132). Probably because of the extensive war narrative Ares is the god most often paired with men. In the poem within the poem Demodocus sings the tale of the Trojan War, and in it Odysseus enters the house of Deiphobus like Ares (Od. 8.518).

When one warrior attacks, he is often said to be like a god. Patroclus attacks twice and Achilles leaps at the Trojans—both like gods (16.705, 16.786, and 21.227).

The closest analogue in the *Odyssey* to the warrior who goes to battle is the character who reenters the narrative to undertake a new and significant task. Telemachus is godlike twice. When he goes to the council to confront the suitors and plan for his trip, he is described by a simile (Od. 2.5). At the end of his stay in Pylos he comes forth from the bath—again godlike—to journey to Sparta (Od. 3.468). Each time Telemachus reenters the narrative to guide the action. When Menelaus prepares to tell Telemachus of his wandering trip home, he is compared to a god (Od. 4.310). The *Odyssey* can come even closer to the entrance of a warrior into a major scene. The appearance of Nausicaa on the beach is a peaceful introduction. She has been sent to the river to meet Odysseus and implement his return to Ithaca, her task in the poem. As she prepares to fulfil this role, she is like Artemis (Od. 6.102). When Penelope comes from her chamber to meet her disguised husband, she enters decisively into the chain of events leading to the recognition and vengeance of Odysseus. She appears as Artemis or Aphrodite (Od. 19.54).

Finally, there is a group of minor characters who make their first entrance or their reentrance into the narrative with a simile comparing them to a god. Cassandra, who enters the *Iliad* only briefly in its final lines, is like Aphrodite (24.699). In the *Odyssey* Helen and Alcinous are compared to gods on their first appearance (Od. 4.122 and Od. 6.309), and Nausicaa is like a goddess when she is first mentioned (Od. 6.16). Briseis, when she is finally returned to the Myrmidon camp, is like Aphrodite or a goddess (19.282 and 19.286). Through this device the poet calls attention to a minor

character who will have a small part in the narrative. In the *Iliad* Helen needs no such introduction since it is her war. In the *Odyssey* she is a minor character. At her first entrance the poet characterizes her with a simile and a description of her silver basket.

A simile traditionally occurs at the entrance of a character into the narrative, and quite often, but not always, the subject of the simile in this place is a god or goddess (*Iliad* 13; *Odyssey* 16).[10] This frequent coincidence of traditional placement and repeated subject suggests that the use of the subject of gods in these similes was as traditional as wind similes are in describing the movements of the army. The choice of the particular god depends strictly on the narrative. Warriors have similes with Ares as the main character; Achilles is once joined with the sun god Hyperion, though this simile describes his shining bronze armor and probably has more affinity to the group of fire similes. Women are either like Artemis or Aphrodite. The general words "immortal" or "god" can describe both men and women who are not involved in war.

These, then, are the two themes which suggest similes of gods to the poet: when a warrior attacked the enemy and when a character entered the narrative.

5. Tree Similes

In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* there are fourteen similes of trees, three of these concerning young saplings, and in every case they are used in contexts describing a hero. As trees either stand solidly or are cut down, so also there are warriors who remain unmoving or who fall dead on the battlefield. Leonteus and Polypoetes, who stand unflinching before the wall, are like two firm oak trees (12.132). Alcathous, who is enchanted by Poseidon and remains fixed, unable to flee or dodge the spear of Idomeneus, is compared to a tree (13.437). Simoesius, Crethus, Orsilochus, Imbrius, Asius, and Sarpedon drop like chopped trees (4.482, 5.560, 13.178, 13.389, and 16.482). When Hector falls wounded by Ajax, he is likened to an uprooted oak. Because his presence is so decisive for the Trojan success and because it is a violation of divine command on this day of Hector's glory, a special fear is generated by his wounding.[11] This

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[10] Supra, p. 38 ff.
[11] Cf. 11.192.

fear is suggested in the simile: the oak hit by a lightning bolt—a scene which strikes terror into all men (14.414). Finally Achilles is described as a sapling and a tree in the orchard (18.56, 57, 437, and 438). Achilles' death does not occur in the *Iliad,* though it is imminent. Thetis knows that he will never return to Phthia, that he is the young tree which will not escape destruction. The description of the slaying of Euphorbus provides the fullest picture: a man nurtures an olive shoot which is suddenly plucked from the earth by a storm wind (17.53). The use of the simile in the case of Achilles is based on analogy to similes describing the young warrior who dies. Similarly Eumaeus tells a gloomy tale of Telemachus who grew like a tree, but who is now awaited by the suitors in ambush (Od. 14.175).[12]

There are two contexts which can be followed by a tree simile: a warrior who dies or a man who stands inflexible and unmoving in battle. By association with the warrior who dies, the tree simile developed into a description of young men about to die.

6. Wolf Similes

There are four wolf similes, all of which occur in the *Iliad* since there is seldom a suitable context for such similes in the *Odyssey.* They describe groups of men in battle fury. In four of the scenes the men are engaged in battle. Trojan and Greek rush on one another like wolves; later the Greeks attack with a wolflike fury (4.471, 11.72 and 16.352). In one scene in which the Myrmidons arm for battle their eagerness is like that of ravening, insatiable wolves (16.156). In such scenes of groups inspired with desire for battle and rushing against the enemy, wolf similes can be used.

7. Deer Similes

There are four passages with deer similes and each characterizes a frightened, dazed, and cringing group of men. Agamemnon upbraids the cowards in the Greek army by calling them fawns, and Poseidon

[12] At Ody. 6.162 Odysseus compares Nausicaa to a palm tree (previously he called her a θάλος at 157). Though not in its formal structure like the tree similes, the passage is too much like them to be left unmentioned. The closest parallel context is the warrior who dies young, but it must be admitted that this comparison does not seem to fit the contextual categories cited for the tree similes.

compares the previous fear of the Trojans to the panic of deer (4.243 and 13.101). When Achilles takes twelve young Trojans for Patroclus' pyre, they are bewildered like fawns, and the Trojans huddle in their city in the same way (21.29 and 22.1). Fawns, a symbol of timid fragility, appear in scenes of hunting and preying, scenes which are well suited to a war context where man stalks man and earns glory only by killing. But there is also one example of fawns who merely exhaust themselves scampering over a plain (4.243); this simile has no direct connection to hunt scenes. It is surprising that there are no such deer similes in the *Odyssey* since they do not seem to require a war context. In any case the four passages in the *Iliad* occur consistently in scenes of frightened groups.

8. Stele Similes

Two similes are of stele. Perhaps these are not enough to prove that a certain type of context suggested a set subject, and yet they both illustrate exactly the same idea. What is lacking in numbers is gained in consistency. Poseidon casts a spell over Alcathous' eyes; and while he is unable to move, Idomeneus slays him. His immobility is compared to that of a stele (13.437). The horses of Aeacus refuse to enter battle or to return to the ships no matter how often Automedon beats them. They, like Alcathous, stand as stationary as a stone slab (17.434). Complete lack of motion is thus twice compared to a stele.

9. Diver Similes

Similes of divers occur three times in scenes of men falling—once from a ship (Od. 12.413), once from a battlement (12.385), and once from a chariot (16.742). This is a small group but so consistent that it is almost surely a traditional category.

10. Hunting Similes

A hunter and his hounds are the main actors in some similes. In the group of lion similes hunters and their dogs were mentioned, but there the lion who confronted them was the most prominent actor who remained throughout the family as he confronted various opponents. Of a different sort are similes where dogs and hunters

are the actors throughout, and they confront a series of changing opponents. Because stalking and killing are the subjects, war contexts alone contain such similes. In four cases a hunting dog chases and attacks his prey, while in the narrative a hero is attacking either a specific opponent or the enemy army. Diomedes and Odysseus pursue Dolon like hounds after a hare or deer, and Antilochus springs on Melanippus as a dog jumps on a fawn (10.360 and 15.579). Hector follows the groups of Achaeans similar to a dog after a boar or lion (8.338).[13] He encourages the Trojans against the Achaeans like hunting dogs (11.292). The similes 11.414 and 12.41 could be hunting scenes or lion similes since both existed in the tradition, and Homer could easily have combined them. They are here treated as lion similes because they are placed in contexts paralleled by the other similes of that group.

11. Similes of Children

Perhaps the most famous comparison to a child occurs in Achilles' question to Patroclus:

[13] See introduction to this chapter. The oral poet and his audience pictured the whole scene of a simile when it was first mentioned and then could draw connections and relationships which seem like leaps to the critic raised on written poetry. Thus when sheep were mentioned both performer and listener knew that the shepherd was there to be used if desired. Thus, 8.338, in spite of the opening reference to the dog, might be classified as a lion simile since both a lion and a boar appear in it. If it were a lion simile, it would not fit the previously discussed contexts for such a simile. However, when Homer is making close connections between simile and narrative, he is usually careful to match numbers in the lion similes. If one hero is to be described by a simile, the simile contains one lion, while if two or three heroes or two armies are acting, the simile contains a number of lions. There are even lion similes with dual forms (5.554, 10.297, and 13.198). Such care in numbers can be a criterion for determining the purpose of the poet. In this simile the poet is concentrating on Hector's pursuit of the enemy. He takes the very natural simile of the hunt and adds to it something from the traditional subject matter of the simile world, a lion or boar. That the pursuit is foremost in his mind is revealed by the connection of Hector—one warrior—to one dog and the lack of connection between the lion or boar—one beast—and the plural Achaeans. Cf. the inequality of numbers at 11.291 ff. and 17.722 ff. On the other hand, the simile 15.271 is composed of a scene from the hunting similes and one from the lion similes. Because the hunting section does not give equal numbers (stag or goat = Trojan army), Homer is concentrating on the lion; consequently, I have included this simile among the lion family. Cf. 5.161, 13.471, and Od. 22.402.

> Why then are you crying, Patroclus, like some little girl who running alongside her mother demands to be picked up, clings to her dress and holds her back as she hurries along, and tearfully looks up at her until she is picked up?
>
> (16.7-10)

Several times in Homer a warrior is said to be like a child. One leader from Asia Minor came to Troy decked in gold like a girl, but he was foolish since the gold could not save his life (2.872). Aeneas advances to fight Idomeneus, who does not flee or grow panicky but stands firm. If he had been shaken, he would have been like a pampered boy (13.470). There are seven such similes in Homer, and in each case a character is doing something which is odd, inept, or unbefitting the person. Sometimes the comparison is a rebuke. Odysseus and Nestor both ridicule the Greeks for their eagerness to return home, both calling them foolish children (2.289 and 2.337). When Eteoneus asks Menelaus if he should invite Telemachus for the evening, Menelaus upbraids him for such a nonsensical question by saying that he talks like a child (Od. 4.32). When Achilles is struggling with the river Scamandar, he rebukes Zeus and Thetis for leading him to such an ignoble end since Zeus had promised so much more glorious a death. Now Achilles thinks that he will drown like a swineherd boy who is swept away by a river (21.282).

Two times a simile of child and mother is used to indicate a warrior's relation to his protector, each time of a notable but somewhat secondary warrior. Athena shields Menelaus from Pandarus' arrow as a mother brushes a fly away from her child (4.130). Teucer hides safely behind Ajax like a child protected by its mother (8.271).

In one passage the simile describes the ease with which Apollo pushes down the Achaean wall: like a boy scattering sand castles on the beach (15.362). The visual connection—scattering a dirt structure—may have suggested such a subject to the poet. With this exception the similes of children are used consistently in two narrative situations: to describe a character who is acting strangely or foolishly and to illustrate the protection given by a strong ally.

12. Swarms of Insects

Wasps, bees, and flies are the subjects of five similes. They are all used with groups of lesser warriors, usually with a whole troop,

though in one case, with two men. When the Greeks gather for the assembly, they resemble swarms of bees and later swarms of flies (2.87 and 2.469). In the *Patrocleia* the battle centers for a while over the fallen Sarpedon around whom men gather so thickly that they are like flies around a milk pail (16.641)[14] Two similes of wasps emphasize the warlike spirit which drives the warriors. The Myrmidons stream from the ships like wasps (16.259), while Polypoetes and Leonteus are as fierce as wasps or bees that guard their homes and young (12.167).

All the insect similes are used in contexts of groups of warriors. Sometimes the simile focuses on the mere number of men; at other times on their waspish spirit.

13. Fish Similes

The whole scene of fishing, an occupation well known to the Greek people, is the basis of a group of similes. As in the case of the lion similes there are a number of actors involved in a brief story which ends in death for the pursued. The fisherman or a predatory fish is the killer; the fish caught are the killed. Patroclus drags a man from his chariot like a fisherman and Scylla draws up six of Odysseus' men in similar fashion (16.406 and Od. 12.251). Achilles chases the terrified Trojan youths as a gluttonous dolphin scatters smaller fish (21.22). The slain suitors lying in the court and the men of Odysseus speared by the Laestrygonians are like caught fish (Od. 22.384 and Od. 10.124). Sarpedon warns Hector not to allow the Trojans to be taken like fish in a net (5.487).

In these cases the fish similes occur in two basic narrative situations: men killed or going to be killed and a warrior or enemy killing. In one passage at 23.692 Euryalus leaps like a fish in shallow water when he is hit, a simile which does not fit the pattern. In this case the motion in the narrative is reflected in the simile and is probably the reason for choosing it.

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[14] In line 16.641 the antecedent of the pronominal subject is vague. Though it could be the two warriors previously mentioned at 630-637, a general subject, any man, breaks the thought from Aeneas and Meriones at 638. Consequently, the simile at 16.641 seems to refer to the crowd of Greeks and Trojans.

14. River Similes

There are six similes of rivers, all of them in the *Iliad.* Homer pictures rushing, swelling, violent rivers rather than more lyrical, placid streams. Such images are suited to war with its active and vigorous panorama and its struggles of powerful men. The *Odyssey* contains few suitable occasions for these similes.

For the most part river similes fall at two places in the narrative. Three times the heroic warrior is likened to a river. Diomedes rushes across the plain like the flow of a winter torrent. Hector is a foaming river which causes a man to halt in dismay, and Ajax is compared to a flood which washes away oak and pine trees in its course (5.87, 5.597,[15] and 11.492).[16] Twice fighting armies are compared to rivers. When the battle is joined after Pandarus has broken the truce, the armies meet with the noise of two racing rivers merging in a valley (4.452). The Ajaxes stand similar to a wooded ridge to break the force of the Trojans who stream about them (17.747).

When Hector turns his chariot away from the Greek ships under Patroclus' victorious attack, the poet sings of the roar of many rivers swollen with rain which sweep across a plain destroying farmlands (16.384). The point of comparison given by the poet is noise. In the rest of Homer there is no direct parallel with a simile in the context of a rumbling chariot, and it does not fit into either group of parallel usages for river similes. Probably this simile is

[15] This simile is not directly joined to Hector; its point of connection is Diomedes who halts just as a man would halt who sees a river before him in full spate. However lines 590-606 describe the forceful attack of Hector and the Trojans; Homer is merely reforming the traditional scene by mentioning a perfectly usual country character in order to attach his simile to a description of the triumphant hero; cf. Fränkel, p. 7 f.

[16] Preceding the simile describing Ajax there is a concise list of five killings which testify to the magnitude of his sweep across the battlefield. Such exaggeration is appropriate in its place because Ajax represents the Greek victory of which Hector is unaware and to which he will immediately turn his attention. Similar is the technique in Book 5, where there is a list of killings by the various Greek heroes before Diomedes, the greatest hero of the moment, rushes across the field in a deadly sweep. This is a splendid introduction for the section of battle which the Greeks are to win and in which Diomedes will be the first extended example of the heroic warrior in action. These river similes cast the hero in an exaggerated heroic role which is underlined by the preceding killings. Hector in Book 5 is aided by Ares and Enyo (5.592 ff.).

related to the simile which describes the two armies joined in battle but which also stresses the noise of their conflict (4.452). There are other similes which were suggested to the poet by a resemblance of sound which will be considered later.[17]

15. Bird Similes

There are a considerable number of bird similes in the Homeric corpus, but they are not used with the consistency which has characterized previous simile groups. There do, however, seem to be two basic positions for these similes, that is, two narrative situations where the poet would feel an inclination to use a bird simile.

Gods and goddesses may appear to men or remain invisible. When gods assume a visible disguise, they have seemingly unlimited choice. The elusive Proteus is a master of such mutations; Athena is a meteor and a rainbow. Often they masquerade as men, but they can also be birds. Such appearances occur often as similes, but in many cases the line between simile and narrative is quite thin. When Athena-Mentes leaves the megaron of Telemachus, she flies upward like a bird, and thus Telemachus realizes that she is a goddess (Od. 1.320). When Athena-Mentor departs from Telemachus and Nestor in Pylos, she is like a sea eagle and all the men are amazed (Od. 3.372).[18] In these two cases there is a remembrance of the bird as an epiphany of the god, a religious tradition which is as old as Middle Minoan art objects.[19] Statues of birds alighting on shrines or birds sitting on the heads or shoulders of gods are early epiphanies of the deity. These have been found in Crete at Knossos and Hagia Triada and at Mycenae in the shaft graves. The two divine transformations in the *Odyssey* and several similes seem to recall this earlier religious belief.

[17] Infra, p. 81 ff.

[18] In fact, this passage is probably not a simile but rather a true transformation. εἰδόμενος/η usually introduces the transformation of a god into a specific character. The previous example (Od. 1.320) may or may not be a true simile. In form it is a simile, but it is closely connected to the action of the narrative. Bibliography on this problem is cited by Coffey, p. 120, n. 29.

[19] This discussion is based on information and plates in M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (3rd ed.; Munich 1967), I, pp. 290-292. Cf. the treatment of Webster 40 ff. and the cautionary statements of G. E. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton 1966), pp. 139, 145 and 176.

There are fourteen passages in which a bird simile describes a god. The gods are varied—Athena, Poseidon, Apollo, Sleep, Thetis, Hermes, and Leucothea—as are the varieties of birds. There is no one bird representing one god, which also accords with the early divine epiphany. It was only necessary to represent the presence of the god with the general shape of a bird. Specific birds were not attached to individual gods until later. The connection of bird to god in the similes is, therefore, very old; it was a part of the oral poet's inheritance from the Mycenaean-Minoan world. When he sang of gods, similes of birds were at hand and easily adaptable to the actions of divine figures.

Birds, especially birds of prey, also appear in similes which accompany attacking warriors. When the warrior is charging against a group of the enemy, the bird—eagle, falcon, or vulture—is driving smaller birds or animals. Automedon rushes on the Trojans like a vulture after geese; Patroclus attacks the Lycians like a falcon scattering daws and starlings (17.460 and 16.582). Odysseus swoops on the relatives of the suitors like an eagle (Od. 24.538). Possibly developed from this usage is Achilles' simile of the starving mother bird which illustrates his loyal, but unrewarded, service to Agamemnon (9.323).

Groups of fighting men are also compared to birds. Odysseus and his men attack the suitors like vultures (Od. 22.302). The Greeks are as numerous as flocks of birds and the Trojans sound like birds, when both sides are marching to an encounter (2.459 and 3.2).

Outside of these two fairly consistent patterns of usage, the bird similes occur in eleven other contexts which seem unrelated. They are:

2.764—the horses of Eumelus are as swift as birds
17.674—Menelaus looks about like an eagle
21.252—Achilles darts back like an eagle
Od. 7.36—the boats of Phaeacians are as swift as birds
Od. 11.605—the noise of the dead rises about Heracles like terrified birds
Od. 12.418—the companions of Odysseus float in the waves like sea-crows
Od. 14.308—the same
Od. 15.479—the Phoenician woman falls into the ship's hold like a sea gull

Od. 16.216—Odysseus and Telemachos weep like birds
Od. 21.411—the twang of Odysseus' bow is like a swallow's song
Od. 22.468—the women hold their heads to be hung like thrushes or doves.

There is insufficient evidence to prove that these similes of birds are in their contexts because they were normally sung in such places. In fact, one might reasonably speculate that the number of women who fall into ships' holds in the epic cycle is fairly small. Probably these examples show contexts where the poet chose to sing a simile and then picked a bird simile because of a parallel of sound, motion, or posture. When Odysseus and Telemachus weep like birds robbed of their young, the sound suggested is vivid; at the same time this simile focuses on the unnatural destruction of the home which is so basic a theme in the *Odyssey*. The bird similes are in the poet's mind. Though often they are used to describe gods or attacking warriors, the poet can draw on them whenever they suit a situation, especially when the situation has no traditional similes of its own.

16. Farm Animal Similes

Of the large families of similes there are two basic animal groups: wild beasts engaged in continual search for means of survival and domesticated farm animals. The former are represented by lions, jackals, leopards, and boars; the latter, by horses, cows, mules, and sheep. In general the two groups represent the life of the wild as opposed to the calm, if toilsome, life of protected peace with mankind. There are many more similes of wild animals; but, of course, the life of the wild is a more natural accompaniment to the battlefield than life on the farm.

Comparisons to farm animals almost always depict either heroes or armies. Agamemnon is at various places in the poems like a bull when he leads the Greek forces and an ox when he is slaughtered (2.480, Od. 4.535, and Od. 11.411). These similes can emphasize different aspects of a scene. The helplessness of a dying warrior is portrayed by the similes of bulls bound and dragged, one brought from the mountains and the other pulled around the altar of Poseidon (13.571 and 20.403). The concern for the fallen Patroclus is well expressed in the simile of Menelaus as a mother cow over her calf (17.4). Odysseus' anger is well described by a comparison to a

growling bitch (Od. 20.14). The freshness of a warrior going to fight is three times portrayed by a horse simile: Paris, Hector, and Achilles all run easily and eagerly into battle (6.506, 15.263, and 22.22). Heroes who work as a team can be described by a team of animals, as when the Ajaxes coordinate their efforts like a yoked pair of oxen (13.703) or when Menelaus and Meriones carry the body of Patroclus like a team of mules (17.742). Similes of farm animals can also be sung in scenes of groups. Thus the comrades of Odysseus are compared to hounds, puppies, and calves (Od. 9.289, Od. 10.216, and Od. 10.410), and the Trojan army is likened to bleating sheep (4.433 and 13.492). The Phaeacian ship which carries Odysseus to Ithaca starts with the drive of four yoked stallions (Od. 13.81), a comparison which is probably visual; as the ship heaves forward into the sea, so the four horses jump forth. But leaving this one exception aside, this group of farm animal similes occurs in two contexts, individual characters or groups of people who are prominent for the moment.

This is to say that such similes can occur in almost any context, peace or war, modifying men. They are not firmly tied to one or two confined usages like the tree or stele similes, and they have a far greater and more flexible range than the lion similes. It may be that this group of images was newer to the tradition and that poets were using it in and adpating it to many contexts. This would be similar to Parry's conclusion that the more fixed, unchanging epithets were old and firmly entrenched in the tradition, while newer epithets were being shifted and developed by the game of analogy.[20] In the flexibility of this group of similes there may be an indication of the continual adaptation and renewal of the oral diction.

17. Fragments of Evidence for the Tradition

There are small groups of similar subjects which are not used with total consistency in describing any one context. Yet because there are a number of such groups, it is tempting to see a series of traditional families centered on these subjects even though context does not seem to define their employment with any rigidity. There are six snow similes, two of which are used to

[20] Parry, p. 221 ff.

illustrate flying missiles (12.156 and 12.278). The others accompany the words of Odysseus, the descent of Iris, the gleam of Myrmidon helmets, and the weeping of Penelope (3.222, 15.170, 19.357, and Od. 19.205). Three times mountain similes emphasize hugeness (Od. 3.290, Od. 10.113, and Od. 11.243). In other places they describe Hector in battle and the Cyclops (13.754 and Od. 9.191). Ajax' shield is like a tower three times (7.219, 11.485, and 17.128). A man falls like a tower (4.462). Leaves, sand, and flowers in various combinations are used to represent an infinite or unimaginable number of men (2.468, 2.800, and Od. 9.51).

None of these groups of similes is used consistently enough to establish a system of basic traditional contexts known to the poet. That they are not more numerous may be mere chance, or it may be that there was really no consistent or frequent usage of them at all in oral singing. However, if the previous classifications have validity and isolate organized systems of simile families used in repeated contexts, then it is probable that the meager evidence here presented points to traditional simile families which are only slightly represented in the two epics that survive.

18. Similes from Outside the Tradition

In the fifteen examples of simile families discussed in this chapter there is evidence that the poet from his long experience knew set subjects to sing in various contexts, that there was a strong tradition guiding this choice. Yet some similes cannot be easily accommodated to such an explanation. At times the poet's reasons for singing certain similes which do not seem a part of the tradition may be discovered, but many will remain mysterious. There are a number of similes which are very closely tied to the narrative, so closely that the reason for the choice of subject is evident to even the casual reader.

First the poet can draw the simile from the surrounding narrative. Ares flies up from the battlefield crying as loudly as nine or ten thousand warriors (5.860); Poseidon's war cry is the same (14.148); the Trojans pull back as far as a spear is cast in war (16.589). These battlefield subjects are taken from the war scene in which the simile appears.

A simile which repeats exactly a physical motion made in the narrative is used often enough to be regarded as a rule of composition. For example:

8.306—a dead man bows his head in the way a poppy bows its head
11.147—a head rolls on the battlefield as a round stone rolls
14.413—Hector hit by a rock spins around as a top spins
15.679—Ajax jumps from ship to ship in the way a fancy rider jumps from horse to horse
20.495—Achilles' horses tread bodies as bulls tread grain on a threshing floor.

In these similes there is an exact repetition of an action which a character performs in the narrative.

Likewise the poet can repeat in a detached simile scene an object taken from the narrative. The cloud of dust kicked up by the Trojan army as it marches to battle is likened to a thick mist (3.10). The general clash raises such a cloud of dust that the warriors' armor grows white as piles of chaff grow white (5.499). In the gusty sea storm of the *Odyssey* the wind of the narrative is the wind of the simile (Od. 5.328). In this case the poet had used a wind simile, a subject with a traditional context, to illustrate a storm in the narrative which is fully in accord with the practice of a poet steeped in the oral tradition—whether he sang or wrote. The stock of subjects was in his memory. Though he often chose a subject familiar to him in a fixed context, he had many subjects in mind from which to choose the one which fit his narrative by recalling the motion or object in the story. Critics may charge him with lack of imagination, especially when he presents similar characters and objects in simile and narrative; but once the poet's process of selection and his dependence upon a tradition is understood, such critics must appreciate his unwillingness to resort to such obvious parallels too often. Analogous to these similes are those bound tightly to the story by a parallel of sound. The Scamander bellows like a bull, and the Cyclops' eye hisses like hot iron thrown into water (21.237 and Od. 9.391). There are many aural similes, some taken from the tradition and some not.[21]

The frequent similes of measurement which suggest a fairly specific distance are often common scenes of every-day farm or athletic life. Two examples will exemplify the type: Odysseus runs as close behind Ajax Oileus as a woman holds a weaving rod to her

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[21] Noted by Hampe, p. 15 f. and Coffey, p. 123 f.

breast (23.760), and Dolon runs as far past Odysseus and Diomedes as mules go when plowing a furrow (10.351).

CONCLUSION: TRADITION AND SUBJECT MATTER

Through the process of grouping the similes by subject matter and then comparing the contexts in which certain subjects characteristically appear, the colorful variety of the simile world is wrapped into small and immensely useful packages. Such small units were in the poet's mind, gleaned from the decades or centuries in which the epic style was developed and refined. The basic group "lion" contained a limited group of the lion's activities in combination with his various friends and foes; but even if the number of actions is small, each act could be developed in different ways and given different emphases. From his years of experience in listening to other poets and fitting similes into his tale, the poet had grown accustomed to joining certain subjects with fixed contexts. By a process which must have been close to trial and error generations of oral poets came to know that some subjects were suited to certain moments in the narrative and could be adapted easily to fit all situations in this particular scene. For example, the lion similes in their diversity are suited to most of the actions of men on the battlefield, and at the same time they vividly depict the varied emotions of characters in such actions.

Such a collection of simile subjects confined to special contexts seems from its extent and relative consistency to be deeply imbedded in the heritage of the oral poet. However, while the antiquity of some elements of this system is evident in the bird and in the lion similes, the development and emphasis of the simile was the task of the individual poet. The infrequency of exactly repeated similes and the balances and correspondences between simile and narrative point to a more individual style in extending the simile. At the very least the basic subject was the legacy of the tradition.

Consequently in this study it has been essential and proper to neglect the details of the fully developed simile. It seems that the poet thought formally in terms of "lion similes" regardless of the extending details in each simile concerning the individual situation of each lion. He chose his broad subject on the basis of the general context reserving the consideration of precise balances between simile and narrative as a later—and more independent—option.

There are two points which are corollaries to this conclusion.

First, the point of comparison (*Vergleichungspunkt*), so hallowed in the history of comment on the similes, does not seems to have been particularly important to the poet. He was concentrating more on choosing a subject which could be developed to fit his context. Second, Fränkel's contention that the simile was conceived by the poet as a unit with its full cast of characters—sheep, shepherd, dogs, and wolves—seems fully justified. Context suggested a basic subject which could be developed to suit the immediate details of the narrative. But along with the subject came the full apparatus of that simile family to be used as the poet willed.

It is also significant that many of the contexts describe a character who is attacking or about to attack, entering the narrative or about to enter the narrative, in general, a man who is doing something or about to do it. These contexts are seen as the same by the poet in choosing his simile subjects. As Homer sang of the Myrmidons arming in *Iliad* 16, he knew that they were about to attack, and he described them in a simile which is commonly used of men who are actually attacking. The poet always anticipated the future direction of his tale and could be expected to motivate the actions of his characters. The warrior who was attacking or who was about to attack seemed the same to him as he looked ahead in his story.

These are broad statements made on evidence which is far from the uniformity of the traditional epithets. For similes the evidence is not as great, is limited to certain contexts, and is far less dominated by the rigorous metrical demands which determine the shape and position of the formulae. In spite of these obstacles there are two qualities which are indispensable in defining, even in a vague way, the tradition: numerous repetitions and consistent usage. Where there are a large number of similes on a particular subject, they do fall with surprising consistency at places in the narrative where the action is repeated.

Inconsistency takes on a new meaning in this theory. It is a word of despair. A simile so designated may be without parallel in the two poems, but it could be amply paralleled in lost works, or it may be an innovation or unique usage. Since this is the case, it is far safer to proceed making use of subjects which are paralleled enough times in equivalent contexts in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to establish them as traditional families. Let us freely admit that with flawed evidence a modern critic can discover only a percentage of the tradition.

Because the greatest number of scenes in the Homeric poems occur on the battlefield, warriors and armies offer the most numerous opportunities for similes. Consequently, further statements drawn from this analysis of subject matter are based only on the similes which accompany war scenes. The necessity of restricting conclusions to such scenes becomes clear when a few comparisons are made between the similes in battle scenes and those in peaceful episodes. In the fighting on the first three days (Book 4.422 through Book 8) and in the fighting on the next day (Books 11 through 17) the subjects of most similes seem to be chosen in accord with the method which has been presented in this chapter. In the fighting on the first days only fourteen per cent of the similes (6 out of 44) do not fit this theory; on the next day nineteen per cent do not fit exactly (30 out of 155). Since these figures are based on a system which can be only partially restored, such percentages show an impressive consistency in the choice of subject matter.

And yet in the books which do not describe the actions of warriors the percentages of disagreement are significantly higher. In Book 1 fifty per cent (2 out of 4) of the similes do not have a subject which can be paralleled in a similar situation. Book 9 contains seventy-five per cent unparalleled usage (3 out of 4). In Book 23, which describes men striving with one another but not on the battlefield, eighty-two per cent of the similes do not fit the theory (9 out of 11); in Book 24, fifty per cent (3 out of 6). Such startling percentages do not necessarily mean that the theory here proposed is wrong, but rather indicate that there are not enough parallel situations to unwarlike contexts to establish a traditional subject matter with any certainty.

Even when the few books which contain a large percentage of disagreement are included, the theory set forth in this chapter accounts for seventy-four per cent of the similes in the *Iliad* (253 out of 343). In this percentage are included only similes whose subjects are suggested several times by a repeated context. Those similes whose subject was chosen because there was a close tie in subject, action, or event with the surrounding narrative have not been counted within this seventy-four per cent; such similes probably depend more upon an impromptu connection made in each individual case than upon an established tradition.

The similes from traditional families are repeated often enough to reveal the range of contexts in which such a subject was used. The following chart groups the contexts in which a simile occurs

under the subject matter of the simile. Because some subjects modify exclusively either a single hero or else a group of warriors, there are separate entries for singular and plural in each context. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of similes in each category found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Chart One

Contexts grouped by the Subject Matter of the Similes

	Singular	Plural
Lion	Fighting warrior (42) More specifically: Physical appearance (2) Emotions of warrior: joy (1) stubbornness (3) warlike spirit (5)	Fighting warriors (10)
Wind	Attack (4) Confusion (1)	Movement of a group (14) Noise of a group (6) Emotion: Relief (1) Confusion and distress (2)
Fire	Gleaming (24) Fighting warrior (14) Anger (5)	Gleaming (2) Fighting warriors (9) More specifically: Noise (4)
God	Attack (10) Enter narrative (25)	
Tree	Dead or wounded (11) Motionless (1)	Dead (1) Motionless (1)
Wolf		Attack (4)
Deer		Fear and cowardice (4)
Stele	Motionless (1)	Motionless (1)
Diver	Falling man (3)	
Hunt	Pursuit and attack (3)	Pursuit and attack (2)
Children	Unwarlike (10) Protection (2)	Unwarlike (2)
Insects		Number (3) Ferocity (2)
Fish	Kill (3)	Dead (3)
River	Destructive sweep (3)	Fighting army (2)
Bird	God (12) Attack (6)	Gods (2) Attack (5)
Domestic Animal	Many contexts singular and plural; for example: Enter battle (3) Dead warrior (4)	Enter battle (2)

This chart provides an analysis of the poems as they stand, but Homer probably would not have been able to produce such a chart since it is doubtful that he was ever asked, "In what contexts do you sing a lion simile?" The more probable question, which he must have asked himself as he composed, was, "What kind of simile will best suit the scene of the fighting warrior?" To answer such a question Chart One would have to be reversed; the various subjects available to the poet would have to be listed under the contexts in which they usually occur. The first chart is useful for modern critics as an analysis of the finished poem; the second chart shows, albeit vaguely, the traditional connections between subject and context which were in the poet's mind.

Chart Two

Subject Matter Grouped by Simile Contexts

	Singular	Plural
Fighting Warrior	Lion-Fire	Lion-Fire-River
Attack	Lion-Bird-God-(Wind) [22]	Lion-Wolf-Bird
Entering Battle or Narrative	God-Animal	Animal
Dead or Wounded	Tree-Animal	Fish
Kill	Fish	
Physical appearance of Warrior	Lion	
Movement		Wind
Motionless	Tree-Stele	Wind-Tree-Stele
Destructive Sweep	River	
Pursuit and Attack	Hunt	Hunt
Gleaming	Fire	Fire
Unwarlike	Children	Children
Protection	Children	
God	Fire-Bird	Bird
Noise		Wind-Fire
Number		Insect
Ferocity		Insect
Emotion:		
Joy in Battle	Lion	
Stubbornness	Lion	
Warlike Spirit	Lion	
Confusion	Wind	Wind
Anger	Fire	
Relief		Wind
Fear		Deer

[22] Cf. the similar subjects listed for this context by Coffey, p. 118 f. and nn. 23-25. Fire is listed as a fifth subject, but at 13.53 and 20.423 the heroes

The organized tradition suggested in this chart is consistent with Parry's conclusions in which he identifies simplicity and extension as the marks of a traditional system.[23] *Simplicity* is the lack of overlapping forms for one specific position; the similes which correspond (i.e., the lion family, the wind family, etc.) have more or less defined contexts in which they appear. Probably the most difficult line to draw lies between the fighting warrior and the attacking warrior. There is some confusion between these two contexts, as might be expected; however similes listed as depicting only the attack of a warrior do not describe the more general picture of the fighting warrior. With minor exceptions there is surprisingly little overlapping of uses. *Extension* is demonstrated by the wide-spread, restricted, and consistent usage of each simile family throughout both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Whether Homer himself was a singer or not, the pressure imposed by impromptu composition was definitely a force in shaping the tradition which Homer inherited and which appears throughout the Homeric poems. The tradition which underlies the similes is not as neat as the system of traditional epithets; however, in his desire to keep the poem moving the singer shunned a simile that might not be easily adapted to the narrative or one which simply could not be developed properly in such a situation. Signs of strain or gross inappropriateness would ruin the whole effect of the simile. Because an oral singer could not think out these balances fully beforehand, but rather had to take a subject and develop it as he sang, he customarily resorted to a set subject or subjects which had previously served him well in similar situations. The compelling forces which created the tradition were ease and familiarity. The poet could think of only so much while composing. If the subject matter were more or less given to him by the tradition, he could devote his attention to shaping the elements of the expanded simile.

Another aspect of the traditional diction which is pointed out by Parry is the growth and development of the oral diction.[24] Even though the poet's language is based on a tradition, it is not static or

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are merely described as fighting warriors. In Book 13 Poseidon is talking about the general success of Hector. In Book 20 Hector meets Achilles and then both exchange speeches; when one of them (Achilles) does attack, the simile subject is, as expected, a god.

[23] Parry esp., pp. 7-8.

[24] Parry, pp. 85-89 and 221-227.

frozen, but by various means, most notably by the game of analogy, the tradition is continually fed with new combinations. The diverse applications of the similes of domestic farm animals may show an emerging or fluid element which has not become firmly attached to any one specific situation, since these similes are used to describe many different facets of the narrative. Either there are not enough examples to allow the construction of a meaningful system of contexts or these similes were not yet prescribed in their usage. Such freedom is also evident in the bird similes which appear in repeated situations, but are also used with flexibility in scenes which were probably unique in the epic world.

There are two tests which can be applied to verify these conclusions: first, a listing of alternate subjects used in the same context whenever such alternates can be found; and second, an examination of the simile subjects in an extended section of narrative.

1. On the basis of Chart Two we can see that lion similes and fire similes are the alternate ways of describing the general picture of the fighting warrior. In the discussion of both families it was pointed out how often each subject occurred in this context; a listing of examples was at that point adequate proof for the existence and the limited usage of each individual subject group.

There is further evidence that a particular context suggested two or three subjects as alternatives. Compare three passages:

> (Ajax advances against the Trojans)
> ἴθυσεν δὲ διὰ προμάχων συῒ εἴκελος ἀλκήν
> (17.281)
>
> (Hector fights over the body of Patroclus)
> Ἕκτωρ τε Πριάμοιο πάϊς, φλογὶ εἴκελος ἀλκήν
> (18.154)
>
> (Idomeneus begins to fight the Trojans)
> Οἱ δ' ὡς Ἰδομενῆα ἴδον φλογὶ εἴκελον ἀλκήν
> (13.330)

In each case the poet describes a fighting warrior, each time in different words. Twice the context suggests an image of fire, but once, of a boar. The change is small in these metrically equivalent units, and there seems no reason to choose one in such a context to

the exclusion of the other. Chart Two was constructed on the assumption that Chart One could be reversed to indicate alternate subjects which the poet would consider as he sang, an assumption substantiated by this small example. Seldom can such precise parallels be found, but there are a few and these give validity to the system of alternatives represented on the second chart.

A second set of parallel verses will illustrate the difference between the various contexts:

> (Sarpedon goes to attack the wall)
> βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, ὅς τ' ἐπιδευὴς
> (12.299)
>
> (Diomedes and Odysseus go to spy on the Trojans)
> βὰν ῥ' ἴμεν ὥς τε λέοντε δύω διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν
> (10.297)
>
> (Telemachus goes to the assembly and Menelaus begins to tell the story of his trip home)
> βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἐκ θαλάμοιο θεῷ ἐναλίγκιος ἄντην
> (Od. 2.5 and Od. 4.310)

In all four examples the poet begins the line with a formulaic phrase: βῆ/βὰν ῥ'/δ' ἴμεν. In the first two passages Homer describes warriors prepared to fight entering a hostile situation; lions are suitable subjects. But when a character is entering a situation where he will play a dominant role, Homer chooses a god to be the subject of the simile. This is in accord with Chart Two, in which we see that lions are customarily used to describe warriors while gods describe men entering the narrative. The introductory phrase remains the same, but context determines the subject.

Homer's sensitivity to context is clear when he describes the beaten and briny Odysseus who is about to enter the gentle world of the princess Nausicaa:

> βῆ δ' ἴμεν ὥς τε λέων ὀρεσίτροφος, ἀλκὶ πεποιθώς
> And he went like a lion raised in the mountain trusting in his strength
> (Od. 6.130)

The introductory phrase is familiar. The warrior is likened to a lion—but to a lion who has been pounded by rain and blown by the wind. Odysseus, who comes to Phaeacia as a warrior against the

forces which have tried to block his return home, does not fit into the peaceful group of Nausicaa and her companions.[25] Homer appropriately uses a simile of a lion rather than a god to describe the entrance of this hero.

There are other examples of alternatives in scenes which are closely parallel: 13.39 and 14.394 ff. where wind or fire are alternate descriptions of the noise of a group; 13.437, where a stele or a tree describes a man who cannot move; 11.155 and 11.172 where fire and lion similes accompany Agamemnon's slaughter of the Trojans.

All these passages represent a small amount of evidence for the traditional employment of alternate categories of simile subjects. The reason that the number of passages is so small is that all have verbal parallels tying the contexts closely together. Many more examples could be found if such a limitation were not imposed; the point is strengthened by including only contexts which are both parallel in subject and also sung in identical words.

Of equal interest are passages where there are violations of the theory presented on Chart Two. At 15.605 Homer describes the rage of Hector:

> μαίνετο δ' ὡς ὅτ' Ἄρης ἐγχέσπαλος ἢ ὀλοὸν πῦρ
> And he raged as when spear-shaking Ares or a destructive fire. . .

Nowhere else do fire and god similes appear as alternatives to describe the fighting warrior. In fact, similes of gods customarily depict the warrior who is attacking. In larger perspective Hector is attacking throughout Book 15; but in the immediately surrounding passage his battle rage is specifically described without mention of his actions. It is such a small step for the poet to break away from the immediate context and to view the whole progress of Hector in Book 15 as an attacking warrior that it would be hard to imagine that an oral poet would scrupulously avoid such a larger view. The discovery of such an inconsistency does not vitiate the conclusions of Chart Two but rather humanizes them. Rigorous application of patterns reveals much about the poet when he follows the tradition closely in a limited passage, but such an analysis will inevitably fail when concerns of the larger narrative exert their influence.

[25] Cf. Whitman, p. 115 f.

Similar is the series 11.747, 22.139, and 15.579. In the first two passages wind and bird similes describe the attack of the warrior, but at 15.579 a hunting scene illustrates the same context.

In those few passages where close verbal parallels can be found there is strong evidence that Homer conceived of the subjects as they are listed by context on Chart Two. It also seems that he saw the same two or three alternate subjects for several contexts.

2. The first half of Book 2 of the *Iliad* (1-483) contains a sufficient number of similes to examine the choice of subject in an extended section of narrative. When Agamemnon calls the army together to hear his plan, a large group must be portrayed. By the time this gathering has ended and the men have scattered to their tents to prepare themselves for the coming muster, five similes have characterized them. Twice the poet describes the noise which such a mob makes. According to Chart Two there are two predominant subjects by which Homer represents the noise of a group of warriors in a simile: wind or fire. In both similes in Book 2 he chooses wind (2.209 and 394). This subject is probably more suited to the situation because the poet wishes to describe the deep reverberant roar of a crowd which is not engaged in destruction. Twice in this book the poet presents the motion of this huge body of men through similes. Mass motion is described by only one subject, wind. Both times the simile is wind stirring the sea or a cornfield (2.144 and 147). Once the mob streams forward to the meeting in numbers as great as the countless swarms of bees which spread across the fields in springtime (2.87). The size of a group is several times indicated by insect similes. Three aspects of a group of warriors are described in this section of Book Two: noise, movement, and number, and in each case the choice of the subject is in accord with the practice of the poet as derived from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Immediately following this section a massing of men for the catalogue of ships is described by four similes. Two similes—leaves and flowers,[26] and insects—present the number of warriors (2.469 and 468). The gleam from their shields is like a fire, the poet's only simile to picture brightness (2.455). And the image of flocks of birds shows the army moving to battle (2.459). All these similes are consistent with the conclusions presented on Chart Two.

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[26] There is some indication that leaves and flowers are used consistently in similes which describe infinite numbers; supra, p. 81.

There are similes which have had to be excluded from this discussion. The evidence to organize these similes into significant categories is so slight that one plays with conjecture in attempting to make them fit a theory. Though they do not disprove the ideas which have been stated here, they offer no substantiation either. Concerning those similes which do fall into large families it seems that the poet because of the demands of oral composition often resorted to a familiar and, consequently, safer method of using the same subject in similar scenes.

There remains the question of the connection between the choice of placement and the choice of subject matter which seem to be two individual choices made on the basis of different factors. The combination of these two choices in the finished performance reflects a system which appears complex and varied because of its many possible combinations and mutations, but in fact, the traditional connections are quite small in number and completely manageable by an oral poet. An understanding of this poetic process depends on separating the major themes of composition from the specific details which form the context of the simile. Such definition is not neat, and often one is reduced to drawing a very thin line; yet this is a useful distinction which will aid in explaining the double choice of the poet: essentially he made each choice by looking at his story in different ways.

The theme is a broad outline of an action in terms of which the poet regularly builds his narrative.[27] It is not attached to any particular name or type character, rather it is a general unit within which the poet organizes the details of his story; e.g., the theme of the council or the aristeia of the single warrior. The headings listed in the first part of Chapter Two are examples of this type of broader theme: the actions of a divine being, the journey of a god, the entrance or the withdrawal of a hero.

Context is a particular version of the theme. It is attached to a specific character and must be sung or be imbedded in formulaic phrases in order to exist; A. B. Lord describes the existence of the theme in this way:

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[27] See the discussions of theme in oral verse by A. B. Lord, "Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos," *TAPhA* 82 (1951), pp. 71-80 and his chapter entitled "The Theme" in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge 1960), pp. 68-98.

> The theme in oral poetry exists at one and the same time in and for itself and for the whole song. This can be said both for the theme in general and also for any individual singer's forms of it. His task is to adapt and adjust it to the particular song that he is re-creating. It does not have a single "pure" form either for the individual singer or for the tradition as a whole. Its form is ever changing in the singer's mind, because the theme is in reality protean; in the singer's mind it has many shapes, all the forms in which he has ever sung it, although his latest rendering of it will naturally be freshest in his mind. It is not a static entity, but a living, changing, adaptable artistic creation.[28]

It is clear that the relation between context and theme is intimate. Yet the simile cannot be hopelessly divorced in fact, spirit, and tone from the detailed description in the surrounding context, since it is to the more specific rendering of the theme that the oral poet looks in choosing an appropriate subject for his simile.

For example, the warrior enters battle; this is a theme which is amply exemplified in the Homeric poems as a traditional location for a simile. The immediate context, however, explains whether he enters fighting, refulgent in his armor, inspiring his troops, attacking another warrior, or in some other way. If the singer introduces a warrior who is rushing to battle, he might use a simile of a lion. If he is gleaming in his armor, then the poet could employ a fire simile. If he is driving the army of the enemy before him and creating utter havoc in a destructive sweep across the battlefield, then the poet might choose a river simile. All three of these alternatives accompany the successive entrances of Diomedes in Book 5 (5.5., 87, and 136). The theme of the entrance of the warrior offers the simile as an alternative means of telling the story, but it is the immediate context which determines the subject matter of each simile. Compare also the variation of subject matter in the series of similes discussed above: 12.299, 10.297, Od. 2.5, Od.4.310, and Od. 6.130.[29]

Behind this system of choices and connections lies the great mass of the oral epic tradition as it had developed in Greece, and to separate the poet from his tradition is impossible. In a real sense Homer was the tradition. Generations of poets had sung songs and

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[28] Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (supra, n. 27), p. 94.
[29] Supra, p. 90.

by trying new types of phrasing and devices of story-telling had developed various ways of presenting a unified tale. Homer listened to singers who had taken various techniques from the tradition and had made these techniques a standard part of their repertoire; then, as he grew to be a singer and gained confidence, he picked those phrases, formulae, connections, and narrative techniques which suited his particular desires and capabilities.[30] In examining the "tradition" underlying the similes, we are inevitably dealing with those elements of the tradition which Homer had selected as appropriate to himself. While a modern critic cannot hope to delineate Homer's idiosyncratic stylistic features, it is impossible that his surviving narratives do not represent much that is central to the earlier tradition. Homer and his tradition are one or at least inextricably and harmoniously united in one man. Homer did not surrender as a slave to a domineering mistress when he became an oral poet; rather he embraced, embodied, developed, and carried on the tradition. This tradition can be seen throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—but with special clarity in the placement and the subject matter of the similes.[31]

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[30] See Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (supra, n. 27), Chapter Two on "Singers; Performance and Training".

[31] A classification of individual similes in accordance with this chapter is given in Column Two on the table in the Appendix.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ORAL COMPOSER: THE EXTENDED SIMILE

Studies of oral poetry often stress the hold of the tradition on the poet so strongly that there seems limited opportunity for flexibility, and yet it is clear to anyone who has studied oral verse, ancient or modern, that oral improvisation requires continual adaptation. The poet must always think of the effect of the passage which he is singing on the development of his song. He is constantly making adjustments in traditional phrases, lines, and scenes in the hope of singing a better story. It comes as no surprise that the Homeric simile in its extension is subject to the same type of adaptation. Even if the Homeric poems are not pure oral verse, they show how a poet who knew the demands and techniques of oral verse-making approached the extension of individual similes.

Once the oral poet began to sing a certain topic in his simile, he could proceed in various ways. He could curtail the simile very quickly mentioning only the subject and an adjective or a brief phrase. A man falling from a wall is like a diver (12.385); Odysseus straddling a plank on the sea is like a man riding a race horse (Od. 5.371). Because Nastes came to the war dressed in gold trusting that this would protect him, he is a warrior foolishly decorated like a girl (2.872). Hecuba presented to Athena the largest and finest robe which shone like a star (6.295). Such short comparisons are useful in illustrating the visual motion of the narrative or lending immediate value to a character or an object, but they do not provide much coloring or variation to the surrounding passage.

When the poet sang a longer simile, he was acutely aware of the poetic effectiveness of the two or three line simile in coloring his narrative by comparing or contrasting it with other objects or actions. In discussing such a subtle quality it is not easy to be objective. A modern critic must admit that it is often impossible to perceive the effect intended by an ancient poet. The similes of snowflakes exemplify the perils of subjective judgment:

> Just as thick-flying flakes of snow drift down on a winter day when Zeus the counselor brings on a snowstorm revealing his

> arrows, and calming the winds he sends down continuing drifts of snow until he has covered the peaks of the high mountains and the jutting rocks and the clovered fields and the prospering work of men, and the snow falls along the harbors and beaches of the grey sea but the waves washing on the beach keep it off—all is covered when the snow of Zeus falls heavily upon it.
>
> (12.278-86)

This passage seems an image of peaceful calm showing the ever-repeated working of Nature with no abruptness or hardship to disturb the calm of a winter's day, and the other snowflake similes describe equally placid scenes. And yet other acts of Zeus in nature portend evil for men as at the beginning of the *Doloneia* the lightning of Zeus suggests evils for men—rain, hail, snow or war (10.5). Even when Zeus stretches a rainbow across the heavens (in modern times a sign of good), men fear war or winter,

> . . .chill winter, which stops men from their works on earth and afflicts their flocks.
>
> (17.549-50)

This might well be the attitude of the Homeric audience toward snow. Suddenly the fine picture of peace and permanence is tinged with fear and suffering. In ascertaining the tone which the poet tried to convey in his similes a modern critic is necessarily at times unsure. Even though such admission will render any proof less precise and will limit the number of similes which can be discussed with any certainty, it is reasonable to handle only those similes in which the tone is clearly indicated by the poet.

Such a limitation will often require omission of the short comparisons, because where there is no clause or descriptive phrase accompanying the noun, it is impossible to talk about the color or tone which the poet had in mind. Hector spinning like a top, a spear point bending like lead, or a man falling like a tower may have provided some suggestive atmosphere, but this is beyond the grasp of today's reader (14.413, 11.237, and 4.462). However there are images which have an established value, such as short comparisons of lions and boars which are taken as much from brutal and bloodthirsty nature as are the longer descriptions. The poet was aware of and exploited such tonal qualities in singing the similes.

I. The Similes of the *Iliad*

1. *Preparing for New Action*

Individual similes can set the tone for a scene. Perhaps the finest example precedes the embassy when the Trojans sit by their camp fires joyfully contemplating the victory which is almost within their grasp:

> Just as when the stars in heaven shine clearly around the gleaming moon when the air is still, and all the peaks and jutting rocks and glens stand out sharply, and from heaven bright air pours down, and all the stars are seen, and the shepherd is glad in his heart, so many fires blazed . . .
>
> (8.555-560)

While the Greeks are striken with panic, terror, and grief:

> Just as two winds stir up the sea filled with fish, the north wind and the west wind, which blow from Thrace, rising suddenly, and a black wave rises into a crest and scatters much seaweed along the coast, so was the heart torn in the breasts of the Achaeans.
>
> (9.4-8)

The despair of the Greeks becomes all the more intense by contrast to the Trojans' joy and the similes are for the most part responsible for conveying the feelings of each side. Only in such a state of despair are the sorrow of Agamemnon and the urgency of the embassy fully intelligible. By such contrasts the similes create atmosphere and emphasize in brief scope the motivation for a scene. The actual causes of the Greeks' unhappiness are told in Book 8; the factual narrative makes the feelings summarized in the similes believable.

More common is the sense of foreboding which accompanies the start of a battle or a risky undertaking.[1] There are two basic images

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[1] The simile is not the only method of coloring a scene with apprehension. For example, with their knowledge of destiny the gods can act directly. When Zeus sends an omen—an eagle clutching a snake—to Troy, the snake is in desperate straits but escapes. Polydamas interprets this sign clearly though Hector disavows all belief in birds (12.200 ff.). Zeus ponders the

used in these similes: stars and storms. The half-simile of the meteor when Athena plunges to the earth to break the truce sheds anxiety over the field.

> Like a star which the son of devious Cronos has sent to be a portent to sailors or to the far-flung armies of men, a bright star shooting many sparks, in such a way did Pallas Athena dart to the earth and leapt into their midst. Wonder seized those who were watching, both the Trojans, tamers of horses, and the strong-greaved Achaeans. And a man would say looking at his neighbor: "Again there will be evil war or terrible strife or else Zeus, who is war's watchman among men, will bring friendship to both sides.
>
> (4.75-84)

Fear and doubt are not contained within the simile, but men do show an attitude of watchfulness toward such an omen. Something is going to happen. Though a wise man could interpret such a sign, most men must wait apprehensively to see the direction of future events. The simile and the reaction to the comet give a sense of foreboding. Even though the audience has heard Zeus order Athena to make the Trojans violate the truce, such a simile puts the audience on guard that something is imminent; someone is going to be wounded or war is going to begin. It is notable that in such a passage the method by which the action will commence is never made clear. If Athena, like other messengers had merely repeated the words of Zeus, there would be no reason to introduce a feeling of apprehension. However, in scenes where war is near or a significant battle is imminent, a feeling of anxiety is dramatically effective. When the crucial battle after the futile embassy and the *Doloneia* begins, the armor which Agamemnon wears is decorated with three

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timing of Patroclus' death (16.644 ff.). Direct action of men can also be significant. Achilles knowing Patroclus' abilities has told his comrade to give relief but not to go further. At 16.686 Patroclus goes further:

> ... if he had only regarded the word of the son of Peleus, he would have fled the evil fate of black death.

Such passages, however, distract the audience from the course of events even though there may be an appropriate pause in the narrative for such an insertion. A simile is probably more effective; it does not require such a pause, it allows the narrative to proceed from the same point, and it can more directly communicate emotion.

serpents like rainbows which Zeus has set in the heavens as a portent for men; Hector darts amid the Trojans like a threatening star; and his armor shines like the lightning of Zeus (11.27, 62, and 66). As Achilles runs to meet Hector before the gates of Troy, his armor gleams like the star which is the brightest in heaven, but which also is a sign of evil for men (22.26).

Such similes also contain descriptions of the coming storm. As the Ajaxes arm, they are as fearsome as the dark cloud which causes the shepherd to seek shelter (4.275).[2] The lightning of Zeus which is twice mentioned at the opening of the *Doloneia* threatens to bring rain, hail, blizzard, or war (10.5 and 154). When Nestor sees the desperate situation of the Greeks, he vacillates like the sea which rolls uncertainly before the storm comes (14.16). In the midst of the battle over Patroclus' body Athena comes like a rainbow which Zeus sets as a portent of war or storm (17.547). In each passage new action is beginning and the outcome is unknown. It is the mark of a good storyteller to convey the mood of his story as well as the facts, and because the simile is not tightly involved with events previous or foreshadowed, it speaks more immediately to the heart than to the intellect and is thus a powerful device for creating atmosphere.[3]

2. *War and Peace*

Homer's nature similes are for the most part drawn from one of two worlds. The one world is idyllic. Nature willingly pours forth its abundance under sunny skies; creatures of nature live with one another in harmony and accord; men rejoice; even animals are lighthearted. The occupants and objects of this world perform their functions in the ordered manner in which they have and will for ages. Waterfalls rush thundering into deep basins; shepherds delight in nature as they watch their flocks, as children lie safely

[2] W. Moog, "Naturgliechnisse und Naturschilderungen bei Homer," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* 6 (1912) 123-173 on p. 134, speaks of such similes: "In ihnen sieht der Mensch das unheilvolle Wirken elementarer Gewalten, er fürchtet ihr Kommen, er ahnt das Losbrechen des Sturms, und er freut sich über ihr Verschwinden."

[3] G. E. Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Princeton 1933), pp. 14-15 and "*Proanaphonesis* in the Scholia to Homer," *AJP* 52 (1931), pp. 320-338 suggests that similes do more than awake fear and doubt in the audience; they foreshadow coming events.

asleep in their mothers' arms. Waves break endlessly against enduring rocks, and stars shining brightly move across the clear dark sky. In the streets women squabble over trivialities; in homes they weave, while pots bubble over wood fires. In the fields men tend their flocks, plough their fields, and reap their harvests; on the hillside woodcutters chop trees; at the farmsteads men thresh wheat and gather their beans and peas. There is a quiet humor in this world. A gardner tries to irrigate his plants and is outrun by the stream. A donkey proudly ignores puny boys beating at his ribs until he has eaten his fill. In short this is a world of peace and permanence. It is opposed to a world of sudden and threatening events—a world where powers are loose which force one to be on his guard. In this violent world animals are driven by hunger to prey on other beasts, and shepherds are ever alert for a swift attack. Vultures scoop up smaller animals in vicious dives. Lions stalk and are in turn hunted. Wolves' jowls are black with the clotted blood of a stag. Storms strafe the earth breaking forests, threatening to sink ships, swelling rivers to destructive levels. Fires level forests and lightning bolts leave smoking ruins. Men fight in vast wars or murder fellow citizens. If there is joy, it is the bloody joy of a lion chancing on the carcass of a stag. The emotions are fear, stunned horror, and restiveness. Both worlds show views of nature, and both views are true to nature, but for a poet the atmosphere which each creates offers a vast potential.

Homer shows his consciousness of these two worlds when he develops a traditional subject in varied ways:

> Just as when the gleam of a burning fire appears to sailors across the water—a fire which burns high in the mountains in a lonely farmyard, but the winds carry them across the teeming sea away from their friends, even though they are unwilling to go . . .
>
> (19.375-78)

> Just as when a consuming fire descends on a dense forest, and the wind whirling it about carries it in all directions, and the bushes struck by the force of the fire fall uprooted . . .
>
> (11.155-57)

These two similes both tell of something destroyed by fire since fire cannot exist without fuel. But the second emphasizes the

destruction of a forest while the first shows a fire seen from afar as it symbolizes the comforts of home. If there is any hardship or pain in the first simile, it is with the sailors. The blaze they see is a peaceful flame which stays on the mainland where they would like to be. The basic subject of both similes is the same; the poet has taken one fire from scenes of peaceful nature and the other, from scenes of destructive nature. Similes comparing the army to birds also show this technique. When the Greeks are forming for the Catalogue they are like birds which swarm joyfully over the meadows; but, when they march toward the Trojan army, they resemble the cranes who bring bloodshed and destruction to Pigmy men (2.459 and 3.2). Often the poet describes the waves breaking on the shore or being whipped up on the open sea in the normal course of nature. But twice such a storm threatens to sink a ship and causes fear to the sailors (15.381 and 624). In some similes a shepherd rejoices (8.555 and 13.492). Most of the time the atmosphere of the simile is not so clearly stated, but the poet's extension of a simile indicates which of the two ways of seeing nature he wants his audience to view at that moment.

The simile can never be more than a background against which the narrative is played, and in the Homeric poems there seem to be two types of background, physical and poetic. Physical background is the stage setting which the poet gives to each scene. The description can be very traditional; for example, the shore of the loud-roaring sea where Chryses prays to Apollo. This setting is a short formulaic phrase,[4] and yet it serves to dramatize the isolation of this man who has been driven away from the camp of the Greeks without his daughter. Physical background can be merely two or three items from a familiar scene. Though there is no detailed description of the plain on which so much of the battle takes place, surely no reader can be unaware of it. From time to time the poet mentions rises in the land, the tomb of Ilus, and trees.[5] But there

[4] 2.209, 6.347, 9.182, 13.798, 23.59.

[5] The physical description of the battlefield is simple. Homer keeps the general area in mind and adheres to the plan in his scattered short references to the battlefield. There are two tombs of fairly large size—Aesyetes and Ilus (2.793; 10.415, 12.166 and 371, 24.349). The tomb of Aesyetes is a watch post for the Trojans while the Tomb of Ilus seems to be far away from the city and relatively near the Greek ships; Hector calls a conference there when the Trojans fill the field up to the wall (10.415). There is also a rise on the plain far from Troy (10.160 and 11.56) which may be near the tomb of

were also bodies of slain warriors and heaps of discarded weapons ever present to the actual participants. Even in scenes where two characters predominate, crowds of men and the bustle of battle surround them. Such a backdrop is appropriate for men who continually fight to kill and to gain glory. There is also physical scenery which is described in great detail like the cave of Calypso which sets the mood of that magical island and the neat palace of Alcinous which shows the accomplishments and ability of this courtly king. The material objects which surround a character and form the physical background can effectively suggest the atmosphere of a scene.

Poetic background is the combination of fact and impression about a character or a place. In the *Doloneia* warriors leave both camps for spying missions. This is pure fact. But the Greeks send forth two of their most distinguished heroes while the Trojans choose a far lesser man. That might and wit are going to battle with, and will eventually vanquish, cowardice and greed is never said by Homer directly; but such an interpretation arises from the sum of impressions which Homer has given in describing the characters. Many elements can contribute to this poetic background: the poet's descriptions of the character, the character's words, his actions, his ancestry, the foretelling of his future, or the way in which other men receive his deeds. The simile because of its potential for creating atmosphere in a scene can assist in suggesting these impressions.

Most often similes will agree in tone with the surrounding narrative. When there is peace or at least no actual hand-to-hand combat, Homer generally uses peaceful similes. Agamemnon opens

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Myrine (2.814). Two trees designate location. The fig tree is toward the city but not too near; the oak tree is at the Scaean gates. These locations are neatly summarized as Agamemnon chases the Trojans away from the ships:

> The Trojans raced by the tomb of ancient Ilus, son of Dardanus, through the middle ground of the plain by the fig tree, as they rushed toward the city. Agamemnon crying after them followed them close and his invincible hands were spotted with the bloody filth. But when they came to the Sceaean gate and the oak tree, there they took a stand...
> (11.166 ff.)

Andromache advises Hector to fortify this spot, and the city will be safe, but the strategic nature of this point is not mentioned again. There is another tree at 5.693. Finally the best indications of corpses are 8.489 ff. and 10.199. The battlefield seems a consistently drawn backdrop for war.

the night conference weeping like a spring that drips dark water; Patroclus is described in the same way when he returns to the peaceful enclave around the tents of Achilles (9.14 and 16.3). He is also like a little girl (16.7). When men arm for battle or are about to enter the actual area of fighting, they are characterized by a peaceful simile to make the change to active combat all the more striking. Both Hector and Paris return to battle like proud and exultant stallions. The two are a relieving wind to tired oarsmen (15.263, 6.506, and 7.4). In Book 2 when the Greeks are going to and from the conference which Agamemnon has called and even when they are arming, similes of peace describe them. It is when they begin to move to battle that the first simile of destruction in nature occurs (2.87, 144, 147, 209, 289, 337, 394, 455, 459, 468, 469, 474, 480, and 800; warlike—2.780 and 781).[6] This warlike tone is carried through to the first two similes of Book 3 (3.2 and 10). When Achilles arms for the battle, he takes his shield; the shield shines like a fire in the mountains seen by sailors on the sea (19.375).

When a character has been in action all along but enters the narrative spotlight after a long absence, the same technique is evident. Polypoetes and Leonteus have presumably been active in the battle since dawn,[7] but they have a scene of their own in which they will fight like wild boars and fierce wasps (12.146 and 167). But before they begin to fight, they are like two tall oaks which day after day

[6] The peaceful simile of flowers and grains of sand by which Iris describes the hordes of approaching Greeks seems to deny this statement (2.800). However there is a larger narrative function in which this simile is involved. The men are put in battle order before the listener during the Catalogue, and then they immediately begin to move to battle. They move forward like the fire that sweeps the land and are as heavy as the lightning of Zeus strafing the earth. But now the action must be retarded. The Greeks are on their way, but the Trojans must organize in similar fashion. Zeus sends Iris to prepare the Trojans which guarantees that they will not be unprepared for the attack, thus removing excitement at the thought of surprise attack and slowing the pace of the narrative. Iris' disguise is fully described. If there were need for rush, it would not have been mentioned or it would have been more briefly described. For example, Athena speaks directly to Diomedes when he must escape quickly (10.507 ff.); Iris does not pause for a disguise when she tells Hector to stay out of battle until Agamemnon is wounded (11.195 ff.). In Book 2 the description of Iris-Polites slows the action. The simile of peace aids in diverting the listeners' attention from the anticipated battle. The similes of war in Book 3 show both armies on the march (3.2 and 10).

[7] They are mentioned in the catalogue of ships at 2.740 ff. At 6.29 Polypoetes kills Astyalus.

stand up under the wind and the rain (12.132). When the action changes from the battlefield to the wall of Troy for the *Teichoscopia*, the similes also shift. On the battlefield war similes are prevalent; on the wall with the elders and Helen, peace is the keynote (3.151, 196, and 197). The most extended picture of peace is shown in the funeral games for Patroclus; after the stormy *aristeia* of Achilles the Greek camp returns to calm as Achilles fulfills his promise to the gentle Patroclus. There is no simile in this book which does not describe a peaceful scene.

Calm, concordant nature accompanies scenes in which fighting plays no part; conversely, war scenes have warlike similes for their background. Since Book 11 is an almost unmitigated story of war from the arming and entrance of Agamemnon to the wounding of Eurypylos, by far the majority of the descriptions of warriors in this book contain similes of destructive nature. There are special reasons explaining similes that are taken from nature at peace. For example, at 11.269 Agamemnon is stopped from fighting by the pains from his earlier wound; this warrior, who has been like a rampaging lion or a ruinous forest fire (11.113, 172, and 155), is now appropriately described by a simile of a woman in childbirth. Throughout the *Iliad* when characters who may be at peace talk about their past experiences on the battlefield, the image of nature at war is the apt comparison. Achilles tells the emissaries that he used to carry all his spoil to Agamemnon who would keep the greater share and distribute only a small portion to his generals::

> As a mother bird brings back mouthfuls of food to her unfledged young ones whenever she finds it, but she herself suffers, so also I have lain awake many nights . . .
>
> (9.323-25)

The ease with which the poet moves between similes of peace and war is evident when Apollo heals Hector (15.262-280). At one minute Hector is racing toward battle like a prideful and playful stallion, then two lines later he is a lion. He has almost immediate effect on the battle situation; the Greeks draw back in fear. To make this transition all the more swift the simile precedes the action which it illustrates: Hector is a lion who frightens hunters; just in that way did Hector frighten the Greeks, an effective piece of story telling which demonstrates the sensitivity of the poet to poetic background.

For battle, only a picture of harsh, realistic nature will satisfy. Agamemnon's aristeia contains perhaps the most severe descriptions of the pitiless natural world.[8] However, as soon as his wound disables him, pain—like the pain of a woman in labor—strikes him, and he is led from the plain. This sensitivity is further evident in Book 3. Two places are contrasted—the city of Troy and the area of the proposed individual combat. One is the place of war; the other, the resting place for old men, the secure haven for families, a chamber for Helen to weave her tapestry of battle scenes which are outside and so distant, and a bedroom where Paris can make love. The similes emphasize this contrast. When the narrative focuses on the field, there are pictures of murderous birds descending on Pygmy men, mists which aid the robber and blind the shepherd, a desperately hungry lion who stops to eat from a fallen stag even though the hunters are racing after him, and a man whose cheeks pale with fear as he jumps back from a snake (3.2, 10, 23, and 33). But on the wall the old men are like cicadas who sing through the forest. To them even the plain looks peaceful; Odysseus is like a fleecy ram among his flock and Priam remembers his words drifting like winter snows (3.151, 196, 197, and 222). The narrative alternates between the town of Troy and the battlefield until the very end of the book. At the end of the book when the two locales are contrasted, the simile helps in setting the tone of the battlefield:

> Thus he spoke and led the way to the bed, and his wife followed after him. These two then slept upon the corded bed, but the son of Atreus wandered through the crowds of men *like a wild beast* . . .
>
> (3.447-49)

Homer was the poet of proportion and modulation. He composed scenes in direct and seemingly uncomplex ways but always with a sense for emphasizing the proper item to the proper extent. As he developed each simile, he was aware of the tone and the atmosphere which it created, and when appropriate, he made this tone correspond to the narrative in which the simile was imbedded.[9]

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[8] Cf. 11.113, 155, and 172.

[9] Similar technique is evident in the series of similes at the end of Book 17. The Greeks carry off Patroclus. The Trojans charge like hunting dogs after a boar. Fighting grows about them like a fire which destroys a city. Menelaus

3. *Peace in War*

Since most similes follow the traditional practice and harmonize with their contexts, those which contrast must have been all the more effective. However, a good craftsman elicits all possible power from his tools; the potential which the simile of peaceful nature had in describing a peaceful scene intensified even more powerfully by contrast the violence of a war scene. The aim remains good story telling and such a goal needs no further justification or apology.

While a warrior is fighting in an aristeia, after a critical action has been successfully completed, or when the fighting moves to a new area and becomes more intense, there is often a pause in the action preceding a new event.[10] Very commonly during this pause the poet pulls his audience away from the immediacy of individual combat to see the scene of the battlefield as a whole—where the armies are and who has the upper hand at the moment. Then the poet focuses on action in a new area with new heroes and new situations. Because such scenes are designed to break the action, any similes which appear in them are similes of peace. Such similes divert the audience from the details of the battle and allow the poet to make a fresh start in his scene of war. The focus of the fighting in Book 12 is the Greek wall. First Sarpedon, at the instigation of Zeus, assaults and almost takes the wall. But before the wall is finally breached, there is a scene of equal battle (12.413-438) in which two similes of peace occur. The Greeks and the Lycians fight across the battlements like two men quarreling over the boundary marker in a field; the war is balanced just as a woman holds a balance weighing her wool (12.421 and 433). This passage falls between two scenes of warfare. Then the battle is described as equal until finally Hector picks up a stone and dashes down the gates. Told without the middle scene the facts of the story would be no different, but the action would have been repetitive. The intervening passage allows the poet to have two heroes attack the wall with no loss of glory

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and Meriones take away the body like a team of mules pulling a ship timber. The Ajaxes hold back the enemy as a ridge holds back a destructive flood. Aeneas and Hector chase the Greeks who scatter like small birds before a falcon (17.722-761). The only simile drawn from nature at peace—the mules—is applied to the heroes who are unable to fight because they are carrying the body (17.742).

[10] Cf. U. Hölscher, *Untersuchungen zur Form der Odyssee* (*Berlin* 1939), pp. 40-41.

to either. Each has his own tactic; instead of one movement against the wall there are two equal thrusts. One succeeds and one fails, but Sarpedon is not eclipsed by Hector's success. And Homer can allow the Greeks to defend their wall stubbornly by presenting the battle as balanced which makes the scene more realistic even though the battle efforts of the Greeks are being here ultimately frustrated by Zeus.

There is also a pause in the action in Book 15 when the poet looks away to the tent of Eurypylus and starts Patroclus back toward the camp of Achilles. War is strained like a carpenter's line (15.410). Before the scene the Trojans have just spilled over the wall; after the scene the battle moves toward the ships with a definite break between the two sections of the battle. The simile of peace in a war situation makes the pause more emphatic. At 17.366 ff. there is a long interval in a long battle. Before the pause the subject is the fight to save the body of Patroclus; after the pause events begin to turn toward Achilles. Automedon driving the horses of Achilles has a small burst of glory after which Ajax suggests that Achilles be informed of Patroclus' death. The second part of the book leads to Book 18. In the pause the battle is balanced as both strive to pull the corpse toward themselves; similarly men stretch a bull's hide by pulling it on all sides (17.389). During the aristeia of Patroclus a major stop occurs (16.632 ff.). Before the pause Patroclus had been a relieving force for the Greeks; after it he disobeys Achilles' injunction and presses toward the city. The fighting sounds like the noise of woodcutters and the warriors gather around the body of Sarpedon like flies around a milk pail (16.633 and 641). A moment of peace in a scene of war, a battle in which both sides are made equal—from such a beginning the narrative begins a new direction with new themes.[11]

A troublesome passage is 13.455-495 which marks a pause in the action while the Trojans under Aeneas and the Greeks under Idomeneus gather about the body of Alcathous. Idomeneus is not like a petted boy but a bristling boar (13.470 and 471). Then as

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[11] Although not in a general scene, the simile at 17.4 is in the pause following the aristeia of Patroclus. Action stops for an exchange of speeches between the victorious Hector and the dying Patroclus and then begins again in the battle over his body. The description of Menelaus as a cow over her young marks the break before the battle enlarges to a greater number of heroes.

Aeneas gathers his companions, he is a shepherd rejoicing in his obedient flock (13.492). Two of the images in this passage are peaceful; but in the case of Idomeneus peace is depicted in the short simile while the hunted boar is presented at length. Homer may simply be concerned with the consistent characterization of Idomeneus, and because this pause takes place within a brief aisteia, he did not want to diminish the stature of his hero. The action is slowed in preparation for a new situation, and peace aids the retarding and detachment, but Idomeneus must remain the warrior whose spirit stays at the high pitch appropriate to such an aristeia. In a longer aristeia with a warrior who was better known there would be time for variation.

With this exception the simile is extended into a scene of nature at peace whenever it occurs in a general passage where the poet's attention shifts from the immediate details of the battlefield. The pause in the narrative, which is the formal device for changing scenes, is often employed without a simile. When the simile is present, it only reinforces what is being done in other ways through the normal devices of the narrative, but in many cases the simile also strenghthens the effect of the pause.

Peaceful similes precede an aristeia. By playing down a man's warlike features during the early activity when other warriors are fighting, the poet prepares to show the hero's strength in combat through contrast. When this main figure finally begins his aristeia and is the only man on the scene, then the similes of war begin as though the first section were merely preparation for what is now to begin. Before Idomeneus is singled out in Book 13, there is a general scene of clashing armies which come together like winds which blow swiftly and raise a cloud of dust (13.334). As a prelude to Agamemnon's single eminence men are likened to reapers; the battle does not change until the hour when the woodcutter stops for lunch (11.67 and 85). Probably the introduction to the aristeia of Diomedes is the longest and most complex, excepting of course that of the principal character Achilles. The Greek troops go to battle rank after rank as the sea, wave after wave, rolls up onto the beach. The Trojans clamor with the squealing of ewes waiting to be milked. The two armies meet with the noise of two falling rivers which pour together into a deep gorge. A man is killed; he falls like a poplar which a craftsman has cut to be the wheel rim on a beautiful chariot (4.422, 433, 452, and 482). Finally when Diomedes himself appears, his armor

shines brightly like an autumn star which has just been dipped in the ocean (5.5).[12]

When Achilles arms, the long simile is a peaceful blaze in a mountain clearing (19.375), though the joy of arming for war is even more explicit:

> The gleam rose up to the heavens and all the earth about them was laughing with light shining off the bronze . . .
>
> (19.362-3)

A possible exception to this use of peaceful similes occurs as the Myrmidons arm before the aristeia of Patroclus and are likened to wolves and wasps, both warlike creatures (16.156 and 259). Patroclus himself, however, is described by peaceful similes until he has actually entered the battle. This departure from common practice may be justified on the basis of good storytelling. Throughout the last part of Book 15 the aim has been to throw fire on the ships. The audience knows that the first flame on a ship will be the sign for the re-entrance of Achilles, who in Book 16 waits for the first view of smoke from the ships. As soon as it comes, the army springs into action. This is not an army which has been fighting day after day but a group of men who have waited to fight and threatened to leave when denied the chance. To describe them arming and marching to battle with images of peace would be inappropriate. They arm quickly and eagerly in the spirit of wolves and wasps. Patroclus, who will have plenty of time to show his skill, is led to battle in the usual way. Only when he begins to fight, do similes of destructive nature describe him.

The peaceful simile which contradicts its setting also shows the inability of a warrior, either permanent or temporary. In Book 8 the power of Zeus is made distressingly clear to the Greeks as threatens the other gods, casts thunderbolts to stop Greek advances, and thunders as the Greeks waver in their thoughts of advance or retreat. In short, the resistance of the Greeks is futile, and they are

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[12] In both the introductions of Agamemnon's and Diomedes' aristeiai there is a short simile of wolves (4.471 and 11.72). Although the similes are short, it is difficult to see any tone in them other than hostility and destruction. On the other hand they are not developed as wolf similes can be to show extreme hostility (cf. 16.156 and 352), and they are formulaic—in fact repeated. Since the longer and consequently stressed similes in both passages emphasize peace, I feel that the interpretation here presented is justified.

for the moment unable to succeed. Their inability is marked by similes of peace describing Greeks who want to be warlike. Teucer, the bowman, hides behind Ajax to steady himself for his shots; he is like a child hiding behind its mother (8.271). He kills one man who bows his head like a poppy overburdened with its own fruit and the spring rains (8.306). In the eleventh book Zeus makes very clear that the Trojans will carry the day from the time when Agamemnon withdraws from battle. The rest of this book is a series of Greek woundings; again the words of Zeus have made it clear that all resistance is vain. Does this not explain why Ajax fighting like a wild beast and like a lion also retreats like a stubborn ass (11.546, 548, and 558)?[13] Because of the terms which Achilles sets for his return to the battle, the plan of Zeus must include the burning of the ships. Once Zeus awakens from the sleep into which he was deceitfully enticed by Hera, the plan proceeds on its inexorable path, and the Greeks are helpless. As the Trojans come close to throwing fire on the ships, the Greeks are characterized as a rock by the sea which has endured the ages' endless succession of waves (15.618). Opposed to them Hector is like a fire, like a wave which threatens to sink a ship and drown the frightened sailors, and like a lion attacking cattle (15.623, 624, and 630). At the end of the book Ajax is hopping from ship to ship like a man who dances on horses; Hector is a bloodthirsty eagle preying on small birds (15.679 and 690). In similes the victors are warlike; the losers, peaceful.

Finally, as a simile of peace can mark an unwarlike act, it can also point up an act which is not to be credited to the warrior involved. The poet has made clear that Zeus has planned the defeat of the Greeks. Thus when Hector picks up a stone to hurl at the Greek

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[13] If the interpretation in Chapter 2, n. 32 is correct, there is an appropriateness to the ass simile here. Previously in Book 11 Greek heroes have been compared to heroic beasts: Odysseus and Diomedes to boars (324), Diomedes to a lion (383), Odysseus to an embattled boar (414), and Ajax to a lion (474). Lines 544-574 are a summary scene which presents the last view we shall have of the general battle for 300 lines. Following this scene Eurypylus is wounded; later he will lend weight to Nestor's arguments by raising Patroclus' compassion for his fellow Greeks. The rest of the book is Nestor's attempt to persuade Achilles to save the Greeks. The valiant Ajax fighting like a wild beast and like a lion (546 and 548), but incapable of holding his ground and retreating stubbornly like a mule (558), is a symbol of Greek despair. The plan of Zeus presses against the Greeks, and Zeus himself is compelling Ajax to retreat (544). The simile of the unwarlike mule further indicates the Greeks' helplessness.

wall, the poet, while admitting that the rock is huge, also says that Zeus made it light for Hector, who is merely the agent for Zeus' plan at the moment. The Trojans, who want to break through the wall, did not have a chance without the helping hand of Zeus all through this episode. The simile of peace at this point emphasizes the dependency of Hector (12.451). The situation and the subjects of the similes are far different when Hector is healed by Apollo but runs to battle to fight on his own. In the former scene Zeus' hand is directly present aiding the characters while the latter, Apollo merely enables and encourages Hector to do his best.[14] Similarly Athena contrives the breaking of the truce. She swats the arrow to one side like a mother shooing a fly away from her child; the blood from the scrape runs down Menelaus' legs like red dye staining ivory, peaceful comparisons that emphasize the hand of the goddess in the action which is not being presented as true warfare (4.130 and 141).[15] Seldom does Homer ask his audience to accept a palpable fake. Warlike similes in these scenes would put them on a par with serious struggles, which they are not, and Homer says so.

There are then three repeated uses of the simile of peace placed in a context of war:

1. To further divert the attention of the audience from the details of a particular battle before a new action begins
2. To stress the peaceful moments before battle begins and, thereby, to emphasize the warlike qualities of the narrative once battle has been joined

[14] The hand of Zeus dominates the battle in book 12. The wall will not hold the Trojans back (3). Zeus whips the Greeks (37 ff.). Zeus plans to give Hector glory, not Asius (173 f.). Zeus sends a blinding dust storm against the Greeks (252 ff.). Zeus rouses Sarpedon; if he had not, the wall would not have been taken (290 ff.). Zeus protects Sarpedon as he rips away bits of battlement (402 f.). The battle is evened out until Zeus gives Hector his glory, and he, as the first Trojan, penetrates the wall (437 ff.). When this task is done, Zeus can look away (13.1 ff.). The warriors are given and denied glory at the whim of Zeus. When Hector breaks down the doors, he is in himself strong and able, but Zeus is responsible for his success. The scholion at 12.450 explains the rejection of this line by Zenodotus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus as unsuitable because it diminishes Hector's power. I feel that the power of Zeus in the battle is sufficiently demonstrated to tolerate this line. If my interpretation of the simile at 451 is correct, the line is most appropriate. Cf. the use of wind similes discussed in the following section.

[15] Another example is at 15.362; Apollo pushes over the Greek wall as easily as a child scatters sand on the beach.

3. To comment on the abilities of a warrior or the restrictions placed upon him.

4. *Series of Similes*

Although oral poets usually concentrate on the scene which they are singing, there are several examples of a conscious paralleling of narrative motifs through a series of similes. When the Trojans are fighting to break the Greek wall, Zeus sends a wind from Mount Ida which blows dust into the eyes of the Greeks and aids the Trojans. Aid from Zeus in the form of wind is also suggested in the similes. Zeus is in full control of the battle in Book 12.

> The Argives broken by the whip of Zeus and crowded together were held by the hollow ships in fear of Hector, a strong man who had caused their panic; but he, as before, fought on like a whirlwind.
>
> (12.37-40)

Leonteus and Polypoetes are like two oaks that stand against the wind and the rain when they resist Asios' attack (12.132). Stones fly through the air during the battle from both sides while the winds are momentarily asleep (12.278). Finally the Trojans attack the wall like a black whirlwind (12.375). The image of the wind, which represents the Trojans, coupled with the actual wind in the narrative keeps the reader aware that Zeus is controlling the battle and that the Trojans must eventually take the wall, that the Greek defense is futile.

There is another sequence of similes showing the might of Hector when he is pushing the Greeks back toward the ships. First the Greek lines are firm like rocks which stand fixed against wind and wave. Hector attacks, and this time the wind and wave beat against a ship, and the hearts of the sailors shudder with fear. When Hector attacks again, he is a lion, and the Greeks are cattle guarded by an ineffectual herdsman (15.615-638). The progress from firmness to flight is told more in the similes than it is in the narrative. The Trojan becomes a stronger opponent as the Greeks weaken.

In the aristeia of Patroclus there is a sequence from clear weather to storm which follows the development of the action. When Patroclus puts out the fire on the ship offering relief to the Greeks, it is as though Zeus had moved a cloud and let the heavens be seen

clearly (16.297). The Trojans retreat from the ships driven by Patroclus as when a cloud moves over the sky; as Hector flees over the ditch to avoid Patroclus, his horses sound like rivers which rush to the plain swollen by the violent storm of Zeus (16.364 and 384).

5. *The Aristeia of Achilles*

Usually the connection from simile to simile is in the continuity of tone rather than subject: groups of images of destructive nature in passages about war, groups of images of tranquil nature in unwarlike scenes. This is true only to a limited extent in the culmination of the Iliad, the aristeia of Achilles. Since this final section is the goal toward which action throughout the *Iliad* has been directed, the poet seems to have lavished special care here in all poetic features including the simile.

Book 18 is a book of decision; Achilles now yearns to enter the battle, a decision reflected in the changes in the narrative elements. Thetis appears in the beginning of the book as the consoling, troubled mother; at the end she helps her son toward war by bringing him new armor. Achilles, who has no armor at the beginning of the book, is fully prepared when the book closes. The sun sets, the sign that Hector's day of glory has come to an end, that a different type of day will dawn. The movement of the book in its various details is from peace to war. The similes accompany the build up of anger. At first Achilles is called a sapling or a tree on the slope of an orchard (18.56 and 57), an appropriately peaceful image since he promises his mother that he will remain out of the battle until she brings him new armor (134 ff. and 188 ff.). Hera, however, sends Iris to spur him into the fight over Patroclus (170 ff.). As he goes to appear on the wall, he makes his first minor entrance into battle. Athena gives him temporary armor by flinging her aegis around his shoulders and placing fire above his head. To accompany the rebirth of his warlike spirit the fire from his head shines like the gleam of signal fires within a besieged city, and his voice is that of a trumpet when a town is being attacked (207 and 219). Then, when he weeps over the corpse of Patroclus, his anger rises like that of a lion deprived of his cubs (318), a subject so often applied to warriors in battle. As he sits with the body, he gathers the fury which will take him to success on the battlefield. Such a gradual rise of anger does not prelude the other aristeiai in the *Iliad*. Usually preparations for battle are described with similes of peace until the warrior actually enters

battle and this will be true of Achilles when his final preparation for battle begins. But Book 18 contains a new topic—the movement from peace to war inside the soul, and it is this movement which is followed by similes which are consistent with the developing atmosphere of the book.

Thetis also joins in the movement from peace to war. She plays three roles in Book 18 symbolizing her change from inactive mother to active helper. She is sitting with the Nereids when she hears the groans of her son. After a lament they all come to the camp where Thetis tries to console Achilles and tells him his fate if he kills Hector. Up to this point Thetis tries to discourage her son from fighting. Then she goes to the forge of Hephaestus sending the Nereids back to the cave in the sea. The departure of her companions in the lament is a visual way of indicating an inner change: she has cast off her mourning and now becomes a supporter of the war which her son will wage. Finally she appears carrying the armor as the harbinger of war. The similes follow this change. Before she returns with the new armor, she describes her son in peaceful similes in the cave of the old man and in the house of Hephaestus; she sees him as a sapling and a tree in an orchard (56, 57, 437 and 438). However, when she comes to the camp with the new arms, the simile is no longer peace; she is a bird of prey (616).[16]

The nineteenth book is the story of reconciliation and arming in which fire is the key image in the similes. When Achilles sees the weapons, his eyes gleam with fire (17). Athena infuses him with divine energy for the day's work coming like a bird of prey (350). As his men arm, his eyes shine with fire, his shield shines like the moon or a fire on a mountain seen from the sea, his helmet gleams like a star, and he goes to battle like brilliant Hyperion (366, 374, 375, 381, and 398). In Book 18 the similes accompanied the rise of

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[16] Thetis plays three successive roles in book eighteen symbolic of her change from inactive mother to active helper—peace to war. First, she is sitting with the Nereids when she hears the groans of her son; they all lament (18.35 ff.). Thetis and the Nereids come to the camp. Thetis tries to console Achilles and tells him his fate if he kills Hector. Second, she goes to the forge of Hephaestus but sends the Nereids back to the cave in the sea. When the Nereids leave her, she has cast off her mourning (a psychological change made visual in the departure of her mourning companions) and becomes a supporter of the war which her son will wage. Finally, she appears carrying the armor as the direct agent of battle; Achilles has said that he will not enter war until she brings the armor.

anger, but now since the hero is about to enter battle, the extended simile is a peaceful one (375).[17]

In the next three books, which describe the course of the fighting until the death of Hector, three types of tonal theme are mixed in the similes: fire, destruction, and peace. Fire, which is used throughout the *Iliad* as a description of a warrior, becomes almost uniquely the image of Achilles by the end of the *Iliad*.[18] It is more than an image. Fire burns around his head when he appears on the wall, and Hephaestus sears the river Scamander with his fire. Fire grows with the anger of Achilles in Book 18 and shines from his weapons in Book 19. His hands are flame, and he rages like a fire in a deep forest (20.371 and 490). When he chases the Trojans into the river, he is like a fire which drives locusts (21.12). He appears to Priam like a star which brings fever to men, and his arms are bright like fire or the sun as he approaches Hector (22.26 and 134).

Second, images of nature at war form part of the background as is appropriate for any aristeia. Achilles threatens Aeneas like an enraged lion and later a ruinous forest fire (20.164 and 490). Like a ravenous dolphin after smaller fish he attacks the Trojans whom he has driven into the river, and he leaps away from the pursuing river like a black eagle, the hunter bird (21.22 and 252). While Hector awaits Achilles like an angered snake (22.93), Achilles chases him as a falcon chases a dove or a dog chases a deer (22.139 and 189). Hector rushes on Achilles the way an eagle rushes on a lamb (22.308).

These two types of similes would be expected in an aristeia, but Homer surprisingly describes the fighting of Achilles with many images of peace. Achilles kills Hippodamas who bellows like a sacrificial bull at the altar while Poseidon rejoices in the sacrifice (20.403). As bulls tread down barley on a threshing floor, so do Achilles' horses trample over the dead bodies and the axle is

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[17] Supra, p. 103 ff.

[18] Whitman discusses the extent of the fire imagery in his chapter 7, "Fire and Other Elements." It is significant that Patroclus never has a fire simile applied to him. He is Achilles' substitute and has limitations set upon him by Achilles. He cannot carry the large spear of Peleus (16.140 ff.). His chariot is drawn by two immortal horses and one mortal, Pedasus (16.152 ff.). Fire does not illuminate the heroic fighting of Patroclus. He himself receives no similes as he arms. These poetic impediments are gone when Achilles enters the fighting; cf. J. I. Armstrong, "The Arming Motif in the *Iliad*," *AJP* 79 (1958), pp. 337-354.

sprinkled with blood (20.495). The river threatens to overwhelm Achilles just as a man guiding a stream for irrigation is outdistanced by the fast flowing water, and he may die like a swineherd boy who is swept away by the river (21.257 and 282).[19] Achilles runs lightly toward the city of Troy like a race horse, and in his pursuit of Hector the two are like two horses which race around a turning point (22.22 and 162). Finally the similes of fire and those of peace are joined to describe the spear point which will kill Hector:

> Just as one star which goes among the others in the darkness of the night, the Evening Star, which stands as the most beautiful star in the heavens, such was gleam from the sharp spear which Achilles was shaking . . .
>
> (22.317-20)

These similes of peace are particularly important because they are unusual in a scene of war. If they were the only indication of an undercurrent of peace opposing the narrative of war, there would probably be no point in stressing them. However the physical background is also not that of other aristeiai. When other men fight, the poet through general scenes of the armies or the constant presence of comrades makes his audience aware that the warrior is always in the midst of the battlefield; and yet Achilles fights alone. He meets his opponents alone and so completely dominates the action that the other heroes and the rest of the army are scarcely mentioned. Achilles is not always in the midst of the conventional battlefield. In Book 21 he fights at the river Scamander:

> But when they came to the crossing place of the fair flowing river, the swirling Xanthus, whose father was the immortal Zeus . . .
>
> Half of the men were crowded into the deep stream with its silver whirls . . .
>
> But the god-born Achilles left his spear there on the bank leaning against the tamarisks . . .
>
> (21.1-2; 7-8; 17-18)

[19] There are two similes of peace in this section—one for Hephaestus and one for Scamander (21.346 and 362). These may contribute to the peaceful similes describing the battle throughout the aristeia but also may describe the presence of the gods' hands in a battle. Cf. supra, p. 110 ff.

This is scarcely the background against which other heroes have fought. The chase around the city of Troy has also a different setting:

> They ran by the watching place and the wind-blown fig tree ever away from the wall along the wagon track, and they came to the fair-flowing spings. There the two source springs of the whirling Scamander spout up. The one runs with hot water and from it steam rises as though from a burning fire; but the other even in summer runs water like hail or cold snow or ice that forms from water. There beside these are the magnificent stone washing basins where the wives of the Trojans and their fair daughters washed their clothes clean in peace time before the sons of the Achaeans came.
>
> (22.145-56)

Once again this is a background appropriate for peacetime activity, not for the slaughter of Hector. Beauty and peace form the physical background and color the actions of the characters in this section of the narrative.

The shield of Achilles in Book 18 is both physical and poetic background. It is physical background simply by being a material possession of a warrior. But it is poetic background because it is decorated with so many images which are similar to the other images which are present throughout the aristeia of Achilles. Peace and war are both represented. One city is at peace; marriages, festivals, and justice are its activities. Ploughmen drink honey-sweet wine as they turn their ploughs; while reapers bind sheaves, girls and young men whistle and sing as they gather grapes. Cattle are driven to pasture, and sheep feed in fields. Dancers whirl in the theater. But the other city is under seige and men wait in ambush; the goddesses Strife, Confusion, and Death go along the battlelines. A bull is attacked by two lions while the herdsmen set dogs against them. In the center of the shield are the heavens dotted with constellations; around the rim is the endless river Ocean. The shield is not a simile, and yet many of its subjects are the same as those in the similes:a city at war, ploughmen, reapers, lions attacking herds, and flocks of sheep. The shield is a picture of the ordered daily life of mankind; it is a summary of the universe in motion—both peace and war, life and death, justice and treachery. This shield with its cluster of

images stands at the beginning of Achilles' aristeia. Homer describes separately the detailed pictures embossed upon it; but when Achilles picks it up, he sees only the red glow of fire (19.374 ff.).[20] In many ways—in the isolated fighting of Achilles, the inappropriateness of the scenery in which he fights, the detail on the shield which he bears to battle, and in many of the similes—the aristeia of Achilles differs from the other aristeiai of the *Iliad*.

In Book 23 when peace is restored to the Greek camp, the similes are all of peace. In Book 24 though Achilles is externally calm, his anger is unabated and dies slowly. Warlike similes describe his anger; he is a lion, and Iris goes to Thetis like a weight attached to a fish hook which brings death to fishes (24.41, 572, and 80).

But why is there such a contrast between the acts of the hero and the way in which they are presented? It is a poetic way of representing the strange behavior of Achilles. He stands out from all the other warriors of the *Iliad* because he is playing the role of the vengeful warrior with uncharacteristic strictness. Though previously Achilles had taken men like Lycaon alive and sold them for ransom, now he will not even acknowledge the suppliant Trojan at his knees. Hector asks him to honor his body at least when he is dead, and Achilles not only refuses but so dishonors the corpse that the gods are distressed. To show the inversion of nature, gods fight gods in severe battle—although no harm can come to them—and, against all experience, fire extinguishes water as Scamander retreats before Hephaestus.

At the end of the poem Achilles regains the humanity which must be a part of every heroic warrior. Diomedes can talk to Glaucus and even exchange gifts in the midst of war; Ajax and Hector can fight like mortal enemies, but when the single combat is over, they exchange compliments and gifts. Such actions do not detract from the honor of a warrior, but show these men are aware of the bonds of humanity which unite them. To praise excellence in an enemy is no vice, but this Achilles will not do. To him for the moment all Trojans are enemies who are to be destroyed and desecrated after death, a vain doctrine, and Achilles finds no satisfaction in maltreating the body of Hector. Only the humanity of Priam shakes Achilles' anger and pride; Priam, though a king, pays homage to the excellence of his son's slayer by kneeling before him.

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[20] For a discussion of the use of the shield see Whitman, pp. 205-206 and K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und Ihr Dichter* (Göttingen 1961), pp. 401-411.

The disparity between the heroic code as exemplified by true warriors and the gruesome semblance of it practiced by Achilles is shown in his actions and the reactions of the gods. Achilles' sleeplessness, weeping, and solitary wandering are symptoms of the emptiness left by Patroclus' death. Dishonoring Hector's lifeless body offers no relief and only outrages the gods, as when Apollo points up Achilles' inhumanity by saying that other men suffer personal loss and forget; the Moirai have put an enduring spirit in all men but Achilles (24.46 ff.). This disparity is reinforced by the similes and the physical setting, both of which create a thoroughly contrasting tone to that of a true heroic aristeia.

The similes are small in scope, but as the poet extended them from the basic subject, he could develop each one to emphasize or contradict his story. If there was a contradiction, the singer was probably commenting on some element in the narrative. The similes in the aristeia of Achilles, though a purely secondary method by which the poet could indicate his feelings, effectively underline the basic themes of the great battle, the disillusionment, and the rebirth of human sensitivity in Achilles. The aristeia of Achilles combines many of the uses of the simile which are seen scattered throughout the rest of the narrative. This story of a great warrior finding inner peace is the culmination of the *Iliad* and reveals both in the building of the larger tale and in the extension of the similes the hand of a practiced and sensitive poet.

II. The Similes of the *Odyssey*

The simile is not as vital a poetic technique in the *Odyssey* as it is in the *Iliad*, therefore any comment is based on a smaller amount of significant evidence and leads to conclusions which are often conjectural. There are two explanations for the lack of firm evidence in the *Odyssey*. First, a modern critic requires many extended similes with adequate parallels, both of which the *Odyssey* lacks, the number of similes being only about one-third that of the *Iliad*. Because the plots of the two poems are so different, the number of parallel instances which can be taken from the *Iliad* and applied to the *Odyssey* is slight. Second, sixty percent of the similes in the *Odyssey* are short, and for the most part it is impossible to ascertain the intent of the poet in singing a short simile. Waves as big as mountains or mountain-sized people do not lend any ascertainable

atmospheric touch to the narrative but they merely express size (3.290, 9.190, 10. 113, and 11.243).[21] Similes of the sun and the moon are not drawn out but indicate the brightness of a palace or cloak (4.45, 7.84, 18.296, 19.234, and 24.148). Without these two sources of evidence a view of the similes in the *Odyssey* which approaches our understanding of the similes in the *Iliad* is impossible.

There are, however, no similes in the *Odyssey* which are used so differently from their counterparts in the *Iliad* that the hand of another poet or the marks of another tradition can be clearly proved. The plot of the *Odyssey* differs so radically from that of the *Iliad* that seeming discrepancies can often be explained by reference to the basic stories. The *Odyssey* is focused on one man who meets many different creatures in many different settings; the *Iliad* is about many different men who meet each other in the same place for the same type of activity, war. If one of the functions of the simile is to provide variation and interest, there simply is less need for similes in the *Odyssey* because of the constantly shifting setting and the varied, wondrous characters who fill the scenes. Yet those similes which do occur in the *Odyssey* seem to be placed, given subjects, and extended in the same way as the similes in the *Iliad*. Subjugated to the story and the narrative demands of individual scenes, the similes in the *Odyssey* are sung with due regard for their traditional qualities and with full feeling for the tone which they lend to the narrative.

The *Odyssey* contains similes of peace and of war, both of which are used to the same effect as they were in the *Iliad*. For example, the young princess, who comes with her companions to wash her fine clothes, meets Odysseus, the unclad solitary stranger cast from the sea. The maid is compared to Artemis running jubilantly on the mountain slopes with her companions while Odysseus is a hungry, weather-worn lion who yearns for food (6.102 and 130). As Odysseus gains admittance into the royal household the simile shows the change in him; his hair is like hyacinth, and Athena sheds grace upon him as a craftsman overlays silver with gold (6.231 and 232). Later when Odysseus takes his vengeance on the suitors, the alternation between peaceful and destructive views of nature is similar to the treatment of aristeiai in the *Iliad*. As Odysseus' anger swells, he snarls like a bitch standing over her pups when she senses danger

[21] In this section all references are to the *Odyssey*.

(20.14). When the warrior is actually in the process of preparing for battle—the fetching and stringing of the bow—the similes become peaceful; the battle is about to begin, but for the moment there is peace. As Penelope opens the doors of the storeroom, they bellow like a bull grazing in the meadow. Odysseus strings the weapon of revenge as though it were a lyre; when he plucks the string, it sings like a swallow (21.48, 21.406 and 411). Then follows a series of individual encounters. Odysseus and his loyalists attack like vultures which slay defenseless birds (22.302). When Odysseus surveys the fallen suitors, he sees them as a heap of fish who lie dying on a sandy beach; he sits amid them like a blood-covered lion (22.384 and 402). The women holding their heads ready for the noose are like thrushes or doves which have fallen into a trap (22.468). However, when the fighting is over, Odysseus is once again beautified with hyacinth hair and a golden grace; Penelope is as happy as men who finally reach land after their ship has been sunk (23.158, 159, and 233).

A simile of peace in a warlike setting marks the inability of warriors in the *Odyssey*'s battle book, Book 22, where two such similes are placed together (22.299 and 302). The suitors are driven like cattle while Odysseus and his men are compared to vultures.

Perhaps the most noticeable departure from the *Iliad* is the use of a continuing theme in the similes. Whenever a certain subject arises, it attracts the same type of simile. When the murder of Agamemnon is mentioned, the simile is of a slain animal: twice of an ox at the stall and once of swine slain for a banquet (4.535 and 11.411; 11.413). In the *Iliad* from Book 18 through 22 fire similes are always applied to Achilles; but fire is a common simile describing several warriors in the *Iliad*. In the *Odyssey* there are certain simile subjects which run throughout the poem as secondary themes. The lion was a traditional image for the warrior; yet similes of lions accompany the lonely Odysseus and the delicate Penelope. Odysseus is the man who might fight continually to win his way home and even in his own palace must fight for his rights; in his battle from a homeless, lonely existence to full recognition and acceptance by his family he is often compared to a lion. This comparison arises, too, when people talk about the revenge which Odysseus will exact from the suitors. Menelaus tells Telemachus that his father will unleash a cruel doom just as a lion devours two fawns, a statement Telemachus reports word for word (4.335 and 17.126). When Odysseus emerges from the bush in Phaeacia, he is like a lion (6.130). Penelo-

pe, a subtle resister of the suitors and a partisan of Odysseus, fears like a lion who is being fenced in by men (4.791). Finally Odysseus after he has slain the suitors is:

> spattered with blood and filth like a lion who departs after feeding on an ox in the countryside—his chest and his jaws on either side are bloody and he is a terrible sight to see (22.402-5)

From the start of the poem this revenge is foreshadowed in the thoughts and actions of Odysseus and Penelope. Part of the foreshadowing is represented in the lion similes sung throughout the poem at the mention of their names and recalled at the moment of triumph.[22]

A thematic group of similes of family relationship crowd about Telemachus, Odysseus, and Penelope. When Telemachus speaks, the images of the father-son relationship seem to spring to his lips. He tells Athena-Mentes that she is as kind to him as a father is to a son, and he reminds the townspeople that Odysseus was a fatherly king to them (1.308 and 2.47). Eumaeus greets Telemachus as a father greets his only son (16.17). He tells Penelope that he was welcomed by Nestor as enthusiastically as a son is welcomed by his father (17.111). Odysseus is also depicted by family similes. Mentor and Athena say that he ruled as gently as a father (2.234 and 5.12). On reaching land he rejoices as children rejoice when they learn that their father will recover from an illness (5.394). When Demodocus sings of the fall of Troy, Odysseus weeps like a woman who sees her husband cut down before the gates of his city (8.523). Odysseus and Telemachus meet in the swineherd's hut and wail like birds bereft of their young (16.216). As Penelope tells of her vacillation before the suitors, she is like Aedon who laments the death of her son (19.518). Similes of family life and love surround these three characters who are struggling to return to their peaceful existence—an existence which they enjoyed before the family was shattered by

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[22] The only other lion simile describes the Cyclops devouring two men, an image that shows the roughness and bestiality of this savage. He is a lion while the Greeks are puppies (9.289 and 292).

Odysseus and Penelope are each compared to lions one-sixth of the time that they are accompanied by a simile (Odysseus: 4 out of 25; Penelope: 1 out of 6).

the Trojan War and which will only be regained when the lord of the house once again walks as master in his halls.[23]

These two motifs are developed in similes over the whole length of the poem. Because the *Iliad* is not a poem which tells a story as continuously as the *Odyssey*, it offers no examples of such an extended theme. The *Odyssey* is a different story lending itself to a different style; the similes aid the poet in telling this type of continuing story more vividly.[24]

Tradition seems to have suggested the placement and the subject of the individual simile, while the poet exerted his own sense of the story in continuing each simile beyond the basic subject. In several repeated situations the poet chose to develop his subject in similar ways and thus offered proof that he was fully conscious of augmenting his own telling of the tale in extending his simile. Each simile could be extended six or seven lines or cut off after a short half-line phrase; thus lion similes are sometimes very long, often medium, and sometimes short. The creation of proper atmosphere seems to have been an important goal for the oral poet. His task was to keep the story moving while giving each element the proper stress since, in essence, he was striving to make the story easier to understand and more interesting. The extension of the simile was not dictated by the details of the surrounding story or the narrative demands of the situation within the simile; rather the decision to stop or to continue was made by the poet as he sang each simile and attempted to achieve a certain effect in developing its particular details. If the simile did not balance the narrative in all its elements—or perhaps in almost none—no harm was done as long as the dramatic illusion of the poem was maintained. Critics have tried often to explain the connection between the groans of Agamenon and the lightning of Zeus (10.5). In oral poetry no precise balance is needed; establishing a mood of anticipation is reason enough for the simile. If the simile continued in its own development further than the narrative situation and thus created a confused and unfulfilled foreshadowing of coming events, the poet was not disturbed. He and

[23] These similes are used a significant number of times. One-quarter of Odysseus' similes refer to the family (6 out of 25); Telemachus has one-half family similes (4 out of 8); Penelope, one-sixth (1 out of 6).

[24] Cf. Whitman, Chapter 12, "The Odyssey and Change" and M. van der Valk, "The Formulaic Character of Homeric Poetry and the Relation between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," *L'Antiquité Classique* 35 (1966), pp. 5-70.

his audience were aware that the simile did not have to match detail with detail. The ravenous wolves are stuffed with their prey, while the Myrmidons have not set foot on the battlefield (16.155 ff.), but there is no difficulty here for an oral poet or for his audience. The extended simile is a kind of independent poem which lends a tone to the whole of the narrative in which it is imbedded even though it may not offer much information about that scene.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ORAL COMPOSITION OF THE SIMILES

The preceding three chapters have described the inception and development of the individual simile from a mixture of the inherited oral tradition and the poet's own sense of good narration. There are certain implications in such a theory which may seem hard to accept, especially those regarding the independent and autonomous nature of the simile. It is natural and easy to assume that a pervasive complementary relationship between each simile and its narrative has been created by the unifying touch of the poet, and such an assumption may be perceptive and valuable in regard to a written masterpiece like the *Aeneid*. It is, however, largely inapplicable to an oral poem.[1]

In several basic aspects the relation between simile and narrative in Homeric poetry is slight:

1. *The Placement of the Simile*: The same type of narrative may have a long simile or a short one or no simile at all or even two similes; the simile in conception is a separate unit which can be added or subtracted easily from a scene.

2. *Point of Comparison*: Some similes have an obvious connection to the narrative while others still defy commentators, and, in addition, there are those in which the point of comparison shifts while the poet is singing the simile.[2] The precision of balance between one object in the narrative and one in the simile is of secondary concern. Of major importance to the poet is the presence or absence of the simile; its connection to its passage is a formal concern and occupies the poet only briefly.

3. *Extension of the Simile:* The simile is a very small atmospheric or tonal unit. It reinforces the direction and subtleties of the narrative; but it does not tell the story and can disagree

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[1] For discussions of various relationships between simile and narrative see: Fränkel, *passim*; K. Riezler, "Das homerische Gleichnis und der Anfang der Philosophie", *Die Antike* 12 (1936), pp. 253-271; Webster, pp. 223-239; W. Schadewaldt, "Die homerische Gleichniswelt und die Kretisch-Mykenische Kunst" in *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (4th ed.; Stuttgart 1965), p. 149 ff.

[2] Fränkel, p. 6 f.

with the details of the surrounding narrative. The length of the extension is determined by the poet's wishes in coloring each scene; which is to say that the length of the simile is controlled by the poetic needs of the total passage and the amount of extension required to create a simile of unambiguous tone.

These three conclusions, which have been derived from an examination of individual similes and their settings, imply that the oral tradition's regulatory force is based more upon suggestion than dictation. When the poet chose to use a certain type of simile, his thinking about placement and subject matter was conditioned by the surrounding narrative and his remembrance of previous performances. The narrative did not require that the poet follow one and only one recommendation of the tradition; he chose between several alternate suggestions. Similarly, when the poet extended his simile, he could always have attempted to devise a series of details which closely paralleled the narrative, but he seems to have sought to match only the tone of the simile with the surrounding narrative. The oral tradition cannot and does not, of itself, compel the poet to choose unwillingly the length, the subject, the location, or the tone of his simile. The poet remains free to develop each simile as he wishes.

Thus the poet is as free in formulating the individual simile as he is in singing any scene in the narrative. It is, therefore, to be expected that the types of materials available to him in terms of words, phrases, and longer blocks of lines should enable him to compose each simile as a unit independent from the narrative. Only if he is adequately supplied with such materials will the interpretation of the similes offered in this study be consistent with our knowledge of oral verse-making. Consequently it is important to determine the kinds of formulaic or linguistic units in which the oral poet composed. There are two topics for examination which aid in isolating the irreducible units of oral composition found in the similes:

1. The repeated similes
2. Methods of extending the simile

I. Homer's Repeated Similes

The repeated similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are important evidence which must be fitted into any theory concerning our

understanding of the oral poet or the composition of the poems. One theory explains that similes are consciously repeated by a master poet who dominated the construction of the whole *Iliad* or the whole *Odyssey*.[3] In this theory such similes become small bits of evidence for a strongly unitarian point of view. Alternatively, one of the pair of repeated similes is criticised as a pale reflection or mindless copy of the other—which then, of course, becomes vigorous and forthright, well-set and suited to the surrounding narrative.[4] From such disagreement it is, at the very least, clear that one's interpretation of repeated similes must somehow be consistent with one's conception of the composition of the poems.[5]

There are numerous repeated similes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In fact, it seems inevitable for an oral poet to repeat short similes coming at the close of the line and filling a conventional space. For example, the following repeated simile-phrases fall between the Bucolic diaeresis and the end of the line:

– ⏑⏑ – ⏓	Times Used
ἠΰτε νεβροί ἠΰτε νεβρός	3
ἠΰτε καπνός	2
ἠΰτε μήνης ἠΰτε μήνη	2
ἠΰτε κούρη	2
ἠΰτε πύργον	3
ἠΰτε ταῦρος	2
νυκτὶ ἐοικώς	2
θηρὶ ἐοικώς	2
ὄρνιθες ὥς ὄρνιθας ὥς	2
ἠέλιος ὥς ἠέλιον ὥς	3
δαίμονι ἶσος	8
ἔρνεϊ ἶσος ἔρνεϊ ἶσον	3
λαίλαπι ἶσος λαίλαπι ἶσοι	3

[3] For example, C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford 1930), p. 92, A. Shewan, "Suspected Flaws in Homeric Similes" in *Homeric Essays* (Oxford 1935), pp. 217-228, and Webster p. 235 ff.

[4] For example, H. Düntzer, *Homerische Abhandlungen* (Leipzig 1872), pp. 499-506; V. Inama, "Le Similitudini nell' *Iliade* e nell' *Odissea*," *RFIC* 5

[5] Text of footnote 5 on page 129.

The choice between several of these metrically equivalent phrases depends on the context: Ajax attracts the phrase "like a tower." However there seems little reason on the basis of immediate context to choose "like a wild beast" over "like a whirlwind"; there are enough examples of warriors attacking like various wild animals —lions or boars—that there appears no reason for the poet to neglect the phrase "θηρὶ ἐοικώς" when speaking of Nestor's attack at 11.747.[6] It is clear that there are metrical considerations which would suggest this list of similes to the poet often enough for him to repeat them. The instances of the wild beast and whirlwind similes imply that several simile units may have been interchangeable provided that their subjects did not drastically disagree with the surrounding narrative and were sanctioned as alternates by the oral tradition; timid fawns and savage animals are essentially so different that they are probably not alternatives for any one context.

More interesting are the eight repeated longer similes ranging from two lines to eight lines; each pair is contained exclusively in only one of the poems so that there is no necessary connection between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The eight repeated longer similes are:

1. 5.782=7.256: The men around Diomedes stand like lions or boars; the single battle of Ajax and Hector is described in the same words
2. 5.860=14.148: Ares and Poseidon on separate occasions shout like nine or ten thousand warriors
3. 6.506=15.263: Paris and Hector both go to battle like a stallion
4. 11.548=17.657: Ajax and Menelaus each retreat from battle like a hungering lion
5. 13.389=16.482: Asius and Sarpedon both fall like oaks
6. Od. 4.335=Od. 17.126: Telemachus repeats the words of Menelaus including the simile of the mother doe
7. Od. 6.232=Od. 23.159: Odysseus steps from his bath in Ithaca and also in Phaeacia covered with grace like a valuable object of silver overlaid with gold.

(1877), pp. 277-375, esp. 359-61; and H. Mancuso, "De Similitudinibus Homericis Capita Selecta. Particula I: Certamen Leonis et Asini," *RFIC* 43 (1915), pp. 56-66.

[5] The challenge is clearly stated by Leaf on 15.263-68: "How a single 'Homer' could have thus repeated his own best passages, careless of their appropriateness, it is for the defenders of the unity of the *Iliad* to say."

[6] For example, 5.161, 11.129; 11.324, 17.281.

And perhaps the best known example is 9.14 which is repeated word for word at 16.3:

> . . . shedding tears like a fountain of black water which pours its dark stream down a steep rock.

One critic with strong unitarian leanings comments: "Perhaps the most beautiful and clearly significant repetition of a motif in the whole *Iliad* is the one of the 'dark-watered spring' which occurs at the beginning of both IX and XVI".[7] Zenodotus—with a more analytic outlook—athetizes the first appearance of the lines in Book 9 probably because they are copies. Clearly this discrepancy in treating this one repeated simile is closely related to each critic's understanding of the poem's composition.

Excision of one of the pair of similes is always a possibility;[8] there are, however, two other theories which might explain the phenomenon of the repeated similes. One theory would explain the second simile as a conscious reminiscence of the first. Another theory maintains that each pair may be a simile unit held in the mind which happened to be used twice.[9]

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[7] Whitman, p. 279. Cf. Webster, p. 236.

[8] However, excision as a critical tool must be judiciously used. Cf. the approach of B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden 1968) to repeated patterns and lines; esp. p. 45: "Repetition, by itself, is *not* sufficient proof of consciously planned effect, or for maintaining that one part is older than another, or that two different poets were at work. Other, and stronger evidence is needed for any of these conclusions."

[9] It might be objected that Homer was not purely an oral poet depending on his memory but could take advantage in some way of the art of writing; cf. A. Lesky, "Homeros", *RE* Suppl. 11 (1968), 703-709. It would be possible in this case for Homer to have composed a simile, found it to his liking, recalled it and used it again. Such repetition would not necessarily involve reminiscence of the previous setting of the simile; see Lesky in *DLZ* 56 (1935) 1291. Yet on the assumption that the similes arose out of oral rather than written practice and that their nature is better explained by initial examination under conditions of oral composition, a modern critic should not automatically jump to the introduction of writing to explain the repeated similes. These similes offer strong indication that they were employed in a way consistent with our knowledge of oral poetic practice. It is most valuable for a discussion of the essential oral nature of these repeated similes to treat them as parallel to other repeated scenes, such as eating and arming scenes, where repetition is not to be explained on the basis of written reuse but on the basis of a very strong tradition. If it is assumed that we possess two occurrences out of four, five, or a potential one hundred repetitions, then the simile is as good as being part of a remembered pool, written or not. In this case my arguments for a collection of reusable similes would apply.

I have cited above one critic who feels that the simile of the dark-watered fountain at the beginning of Book 16 is a reminiscence of the same simile in Book 9. Numerous parallels between the two books suggest that his interpretation of the repeated simile is not unreasonable. The situation of the Greeks at the end of Book 15 is again desperate—even more desperate than in Book 9. Achilles' emotions have deepened. Now there will be another appeal to Achilles, but this time a more effective kind of appeal. Achilles in his own words will refer to the hollow offer made by Agamemnon in Book 9, but in Book 16 he will yield on one point by sending Patroclus out to aid the Greeks. There is every reason to think that Homer wanted his audience to remember the parallel scene and appeal in Book 9 as they heard the plea of Patroclus. The later simile which echoes the earlier, may suggest to the audience that a scene is coming which will have important parallels to earlier scenes, as well as significant differences. In the same way it has been suggested that the simile of Odysseus stepping from the bath in Ithaca at Od. 23.159 is meant to recall the earlier simile when he came from the bath in Phaeacia at Od. 6.232. In Phaeacia he was beginning his return to civilized life; in Ithaca he had regained his family, his home, and his throne.[10] There may even be good cause to remember the earlier simile of Paris racing joyfully to battle like a stallion at the point when Hector is cured and races to battle with the identical description (6.506=15.263). The acts and the abilities of these two men on behalf of Troy are clearly contrasted throughout the *Iliad*.[11] In these three sets of repeated longer similes there may be reason to assert that the poet has repeated the second simile to remind the audience of the first singing of the simile.

And yet no critic has claimed that the second simile of the hungering lion, which accompanies the retreat of Menelaus, is meant to recall the earlier retreat of Ajax (17.657=11.548). These two similes are about the same distance apart in the narrative as the two similes of the fountain of black water. Why is one a clear

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Lee suggests on p. 26 that these similes were repeated because there was no tradition upon which poets could draw in creating them; since the simile was a late creation, poets turned to pre-existing material "in default of traditional formulas". Such a view ignores the subtlety with which the simile of the hungering lion is placed in its setting. In addition, this argument is weakened by the overwhelming number of unrepeated similes.

[10] Webster, p. 236.

[11] Cf. Bowra *op. cit.* (supra, n. 3) p. 92.

reminiscence while the other is not? The same question could be asked of the similes at 5.860 and 14.148: Poseidon shouts like nine or ten thousand warriors to encourage the Greeks in Book 14; Ares shouts in the same way when he is wounded at the end of Book 5. Euen though Idomeneus kills Asius who falls like an oak, there are no critics who have seen a reminiscence when Sarpedon falls in exactly the same way under the attack of Patroclus (13.389=16.482). Brave men stand around Diomedes like lions or boars; in the same words the single battle of Ajax and Hector is described. Where is the conscious reminiscence here (5.782=7.256)?

The final repeated simile occurs at Od. 4.335 and Od. 17.126 in a speech which is repeated word for word. The repetition is quite extensive, and it seems that the simile is merely a part of the whole repeated speech. Since too many messengers repeat messages word for word to call this a subtle reminiscence, it is obviously a simple report of an earlier speech, simile and all. This pair of similes can safely be disregarded in a discussion which focuses on similes repeated for no reason other than to echo a previous passage.

However in the case of the other seven long repeated similes there are three sets of parallel scenes where the narrative itself suggests that Homer is evoking recollection of a previous passage. In each of these sections there is a repeated simile, but even without the simile these passages might be called consciously reminiscent, or they would at least invite comparison because of the parallel to a previous situation. Since in the remaining four sets there is no parallel in the narrative, either there must be further evidence found to insist that those particular three similes are consciously repeated, or else there is need to look for other interpretations which will explain all seven sets of similes consistently.

Perhaps the most instructive of the repeated similes is 11.548=17.657 where the simile is almost repeated, but the introductory two lines are varied:

> And even as a tawny lion is driven from the cattle yard by dogs and country folk . . .
>
> (11.548-9)

> He went his way as a lion from the cattle yard where he has tired himself harassing dogs and men . . .
>
> (17.657-8)

> who do not allow him to seize the fattest of the herd, watching through the night, but lusting for flesh he drives on, yet accomplishes nothing. Many spears fly against him from brave hands, and burning torches which he flees even though he is eager. At dawn he goes away disappointed.
>
> (11.550-555 and 17.659-664)

The picture of the lion in the last six lines of both similes is the same word for word. He is a hungering beast who is stopped from snatching food; he waits the whole night through and then goes away still hungry. What is different in the two similes is the initial situation. In the simile from Book 11 the lion has been attacking the cattle pen all night and with the coming of dawn is finally driven away. In the simile in Book 17 the lion has exhausted himself by making attempts throughout the night and departs because the men have outlasted him. The first lion has been momentarily fought off, departs still bold and vigorous, and most probably will return to continue harassing the shepherds. The second lion has had no more success and departs exhausted because the farmers have so stoutly defended their holdings. The first lion must be driven away even with the arrival of dawn; the second lion admits defeat. The major difference in phrasing at the beginning of each simile is the verb and the change of the lion from object in the first simile to subject in the second. The rest of the cast of characters in this small story remains the same, men and dogs. In Book 11, where the men and dogs pursue the lion, the verb is ἐσσεύοντο; in Book 17 when the lion grows tired of provoking the men and dogs, the verb is κάμῃσι which makes these two lions seem to be different animals even though most of the description is the same.

The change in the opening of the similes is dictated by the situation in the narrative. In Book 11 Ajax has been successful even though many of the Greek leaders have been wounded and have had to be taken back to camp. Ajax is still fighting with all the strength he can muster, but there is a stronger force working against him. The text states that Zeus turned Ajax to flight; in spite of this pressure upon him Ajax gave way slowly and stubbornly (544). He gave way like the lion who retreats unwillingly and is fought off with difficulty. In Book 17, however, Ajax asks Menelaus to withdraw to find Antilochus. Since Menelaus is worried lest the body of Patroclus be taken while he is gone, he is careful to give

special urging to Meriones and to the two Ajaxes. Then he withdraws reluctantly like the lion who gives away after he has been overpowered and leaves without the prize he hungered for.

It is clear that Homer has endeavored to make each lion suit the narrative in which he appears. The simile from Book 11 would not fit in Book 17 because the first two lines do not parallel the basic outline of the situation there, and the same is true of placing the simile from Book 17 into Book 11. And yet only two out of eight lines were altered to suit the particular passage, while the other six lines were repeated word for word and were very specifically not adapted to their location.

The fact that the same simile can be used with so little change in two quite different scenes is significant. The poet seems to have had a block of lines about the hungering lion independent of any particular context. Similarly the basic arming scene and the basic scene of preparation of a meal were carried in the poet's mind without regard to a specific narrative context. All of these scenes could be altered to suit the needs of the immediate narrative, as could any of the other sets of repeated similes, long or short. In the case of the short similes there may have been some metrical necessity which dictated their use, but they were as much units held in the poet's mind as were the long similes which are repeated.[12]

Such a conclusion does not imply that the similes in the Homeric text are direct descendants from Mycenaean ancestors or survivals from a far distant era. G. P. Shipp has listed the features of the similes which are linguistically late and has, thereby, shown that the simile as it appears in the preserved text is relatively late in composition.[13] Webster states that some similes, like those of lions or boars, are quite old, and Shipp concurs that at the very least the short comparisons are the older form from which the more elaborate

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[12] This statement goes against the judgement of Shewan *op. cit.* (supra, n. 3) p. 220: "It is very difficult . . . to accept the explanation from imitation or borrowing, whether from a predecessor or a common stock.

To sustain such a theory, it would be necessary for its advocates to prove, beyond doubt, that in such cases the recurring simile is in one of its occurrences unsuitable to the context and borrowed. This can seldom, if ever, be shown. But till that is done, we are entitled to accept the duplicated image as original in both cases." Such a conclusion seems to advance our understanding very slightly and to ignore the implications of the simile of the hungering lion.

[13] Shipp, pp. 3-222.

simile evolved.[14] The comparison as a mode of expression, the limited number of simile families, and the repeated connection between one specific narrative feature and the same simile subject —all these could be very ancient without affecting the particular formulation of the simile as it exists in the Homeric text. J. B. Hainsworth and A. Hoekstra are convinced that the traditional diction underwent perceptible change and that the survivals from earlier centuries would quite naturally disappear or be replaced by more contemporary phrasing; Hoekstra adds that the oral language changed at a greater rate at the very end of the tradition than it had for the preceding centuries.[15] Both scholars can maintain such a view about the oral diction without insisting that the old stories and the archaeological survivals would necessarily be required to disappear at the same time. The linguistic formulation of a fact or an idea does not affect the ancientness of that fact or idea. I suspect that the lion comparison as a form of expression is quite old and that there were extended lion similes in Greek hexameter verse long before Homer's composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The extended simile as a means of storytelling is so frequent in occurrence, so patterned in usage, and so deeply embedded in the fabric of the poems that it is almost impossible to think of it as the discovery of any one man. The simile as a means of expression is at least as old as the Gilgamish epic and other ancient Near Eastern texts. In these examples the simile is usually of the short, embryonic type. Only Homer regularly uses the extended simile. In addition, the phrasing of the lion simile and of most of the other similes seems relatively recent, perhaps within one hundred years of the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Homer, as a young poet, might have heard the bard who formulated the simile of the dark-watered fountain and might have carried it in his mind. Then this simile, although relatively late in its phrasing, would still be one of a large collection of anonymous similes which could be called traditional because of the long history of the simile as a form of expression. Perhaps Homer even composed the simile of the dark-watered fountain himself in his youth, remembered it, and used it several times in his recitations. In this case it would also be part of a large

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[14] Shipp, p. 208 ff. and Webster, p. 223 ff.

[15] J. B. Hainsworth, "The Homeric Formula and the Problem of its Transmission," *BICS* 9 (1962), pp. 57-68 and A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* (Amsterdam 1965).

collection of independent, though no longer anonymous, similes. The method of expression would still be traditional in that young Homer built his simile in imitation of a familiar form, but the particular simile would show the influence of recent linguistic developments because, in fact, it was composed by the poet himself.

It should be noted that Shipp in his study of the language of the similes is seeking late, but not necessarily post-Homeric, forms; he is not trying to analyze the amalgam of linguistic strata which are present in the language of any one simile.[16] His method is proper for his purpose, since if similes uniformly contain a large number of late forms, then it is reasonable to assume that most of them were composed in their particular formulation late in the development of the oral tradition. It would, however, be a distortion of Shipp's conclusions to state that all similes contain only late forms; similes are composed of words borrowed from diverse ages and dialects. For example, in the simile of the hungering lion Shipp notes only three linguistic particularities: ἐγρήσσοντες, ἐρατίζων and ἀγροιῶται. The remaining words are either earlier words or do not bear a linguistic imprint which would permit any precise dating. In addition, the line 11.549=15.272 leads an independent enough existence in the poet's repertoire that it can be transferred from one context to another in spite of the fact that one of these linguistically late features is included in this line. It is, thus, a line that is marked as late but still is carried as an improvisational unit in the poet's mind.

The same amalgam of old and new can be found in any of the repeated similes. Consistency in analyzing components of oral poetry demands that the repeated similes be treated as units which were as traditional and as autonomous, but also as adaptable, as the basic arming and banquet scenes.[17]

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[16] Cf. the cautionary comments of P. Chantraine in his review of Shipp in *Revue de Philologie* 29 (1955), p. 72 f. Also G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962), p. 201 ff.

[17] As an example of the mixing of old and new in arming scenes, cf. the armings of Patroclus at 16.130 ff. and of Achilles at 19.367 ff. Both are built on the basis of a traditional framework; the structure of each of these scenes has been analyzed by W. Arend, *Die Typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933), pp. 92-97 and Table 6 and J. I. Armstrong, "The Arming Motif in the *Iliad*," *AJP* 79 (1958), pp. 337-54. Into this framework are set lines 16.141-144 = 19.388-391. These lines concerning the Pelian ash spear are not part of the traditional scene, yet are basic to the arming scenes in their contexts, and are—as might be expected—cited in Shipp as containing a sign of

Such a theory about the repeated similes has important implications for the composition of passages containing such similes, and perhaps for the passages surrounding other similes as well. Any critical comment on the organic unity of simile and narrative in these passages is based upon the happy matching of two entities which probably were separated in the traditional heritage of the poet. It would seem more likely for a simile to have some rough edges and not to fit too easily into its setting. The poet did not in a mood of detached meditation create a unity of simile and narrative in which each component complemented the other and from which one element could not be removed without destroying the whole.[18] Rather, as he sang, he could fit the simile, as a unit unto itself, into a passage of coherent narrative in the hope that the two elements would blend; but there was no guarantee.[19] Chances were against that type of perfect match between simile and narrative which has been so well illustrated by V. Pöschl in regard to the similes of Vergil.[20]

The poet did not, however, abdicate his proper concern with the artistic effect of the whole passage. It is evident how well the poet

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linguistic lateness (pp. 35 and 92 n. 2). It is significant that even lines marked as being late compositions are made up of smaller units paralleled elsewhere in the *Iliad,* none of which are noted by Shipp as containing any sign of linguistic lateness (with 16.141 compare 5.746, 8.390, 16.802, 2.231, 15.569 and 23.668; with 16.143 compare 21.162 and 4.219). Thus, arming scenes show a relatively late formation in several words, were probably carried in the poet's mind as units to judge from their repetition, and betray a much older tradition in their standard format and formulaic phrasing. In this combination of old and new they are parallel to the similes.

[18] This statement may seem to contradict the words of Fränkel, p. 105: "Aber dass die Gleichnisse grundsätzlich eine von der Erzählung ganz freie, selbständige Ausmalung des einmal angegebenen Motivs böten, ist falsch." However I do not believe that Fränkel is working at cross purposes to the conclusions of this study. He is analysing the numerous connections which were made by the poet to his simile scenes while admitting that there are always details which would not fit; I am concentrating more on those elements of the similes which did not fit while agreeing that there are a surprising number of effective connections. It seems reasonable that the poet could have chosen one of his simile blocks to sing and, when finished, realized consciously or unconsciously that the action could now be picked up at a point further advanced than it was at the beginning of the simile.

[19] Fränkel, p. 6 points to a looser connection between simile and narrative when he notes that there are similes which have a double point of comparison, e.g., 13.492, 15.624, 5.87. The basic insignificance of the point of comparison is revealed when the poet can change it quite easily in the course of his song.

[20] For example, the careful analysis of the simile of Diana, p. 115 ff. in V. Pöschl, *Die Dichtkunst Virgils* (2nd ed.; Darmstadt 1964).

has formed his material to fit the narrative in the two repeated lion similes. As a second example, the excellence of the galloping horse as a comparison to the proudly running Paris at the end of Book 6 has been noted by diverse critics; as a corollary this same simile at 15.263 is not acknowledged to be as well suited to its surrounding passage, though it is by no means inapt.[21] In recognizing the standardized quality of similes there is no slight intended to the poetic effectiveness with which the poet employed his traditional material. The bricks of a well-built house wall are as homely out of context as those from a rough foundation; it is the placement of each brick in proper relation to those around it which creates a well-laid wall.

These comments on the repeated similes need not apply to all similes. Speculations on oral composition would be much easier if it could be assumed that Homer always created in a uniform way, but there is no binding constraint which forced the poet either to choose a simile from his previous experience or to formulate each simile anew. Because Homer customarily used repeated lines and patterns when a warrior armed or ate or participated in many of the usual activities of warriors, it may be reasonable to assume that there are more independent simile units in the text than existing evidence will prove.[22] If other similes were drawn from a pre-existing collection within the poet's mind, then there is support for the harsh criticism of Gilbert Murray:

> Every simile is fine, vivid, and lifelike; but a good many of them are not apposite to the case for which they are used, and all have the same ready-made air.[23]

Many different critics have found difficulties in joining particular similes to the narrative. The conclusions of this study of repeated similes imply that ill-matched similes or, in fact, misfits could be at times expected, though they probably would not be regarded as misfits by the poet who, whenever he drew upon a store of traditional simile subjects and scenes, was trying to achieve only a basic match to his narrative. Since he gave little attention to pairing each detail of such a simile to some fact in the surrounding story, it is

[21] Leaf, on 6.505 and 15.263-68; and C.R. Beye, *The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition* (New York 1966), p. 27 f.
[22] Cf. the various scenes analyzed by Arend *op. cit.* (supra, n. 17).
[23] Murray, p. 245.

impressive that he so often achieved an effective balance in tone and in individual details.

These conclusions are supported by the repeated simile of the hungering lion. In Book 11 Ajax does depart from men who are throwing spears at him, but there is no particular prize for which he has been striving nor have his opponents been fighting him so long that they could be described as watching their treasure the whole night through. In Book 17 Menelaus does depart from a prize which is specific and the fight has been going on over this one prize long enough that the mention of men who have been guarding throughout the night has point. Menelaus, however, does not leave immediately as the lion does, but he remains for a four line speech to the Ajaxes and Meriones before he withdraws. Each simile contains some details which do not suit the location in which it occurs. But no critic has said that the simile itself is unforceful or lacks color. In both cases a warrior withdraws from battle reluctantly; as Homer thought over his collection of similes, the image of the hungering lion came to mind as a subject well suited to the narrative situation. He sang the basic unit, much as he had sung arming and eating scenes. The parallels were obvious and appropriate, even though some details did not match the surrounding scene.[24]

Such a theory concerning repeated similes implies that there was little reminiscence by these similes. The repeated simile was merely another repeated unit. Just as there is no particular reminiscence—or even recollection—involved when Odysseus has three meals in one night, so also in repeating simile units there is no reminiscence. The poet had chosen the same lines twice in similar situations. In fact, each set of repeated similes does occur in contexts which are enough alike to suggest the same description.

The poet who composed in this way is familiar from other studies of oral poetry. He was a poet who composed in terms of units: half-lines, whole lines, and blocks of lines, a store of ready-made phrases and passages from which he could always draw. He tried to adapt his units of composition when he could, though his prime goal was to keep the story moving forward. Sometimes he came to contexts where he customarily sang a simile. Seven times in the

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[24] Cf. Bowra *op. cit.* (supra n. 3), p. 119: "The epic poet learned some similes as he learned other stock-lines, and, if these were less appropriate in some places than in others, that was because for the moment he relied more on his training than on his judgement."

Iliad and in the *Odyssey* he chose the same simile unit for a parallel context; though on one of these occasions he had to adapt the opening a little, essentially it remained the same simile. While it is impossible to identify which similes were taken with little or no alteration from the pool of traditional oral units, the examination of the repeated similes demonstrates that the poet did draw upon such a source at the very least seven times.[25] It is of the utmost importance to realize that there is evidence for the existence of this collection of similes because such a supply enabled the poet to sing a simile as easily as he sang any other type scene.

II. Methods of Extending the Simile

The second major question in analyzing the oral nature of the similes concerns the methods of extending the simile. It is evident that there are common features in long and short similes.[26] Many of the short similes seem to be independent formulaic units which fill a standard metrical space in the line. The simile which is contructed from a single unit of such a nature seems more a building block whose internal components are fixed because of the demands of the hexameter line than an individual creation grafted neatly into that particular spot in the narrative. It is possible to demonstrate, in addition, that the majority of longer similes were composed by extending the basic simile unit through the addition of separate lines and half-lines which are not organically related to each other or to the simile as a whole, the extended simile being as much a product of oral composition as the narrative.

Because the poet thought in terms of the basic simile subject, it is reasonable to assume that the short simile was the essential simile form. There was always a part-line simile available from many of the traditional simile families which would fit easily into the metrical cola of the line.[27] A brief summary of the possibilities for introducing

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[25] Cf. the similar explanation of repeated typical scenes by Fenik *op. cit.* (supra, n. 8), p. 47: "... the source of the typical scenes is not to be found in a particular poem, but in the general technique of oral composition."

[26] Cf. Webster, pp. 223 ff. and 235.

[27] Much of the discussion of the colometric structure and the placement of the caesurae in the hexameter line will be based on the studies of O'Neill and Porter: E. G. O'Neill, Jr., "The Localization of Metrical Word-Types in the Greek Hexameter," *YCS* 8 (1942), pp. 103-178 and H. N. Porter, "The Early Greek Hexameter," *YCS* 12 (1951), pp. 1-63. I will refer to these articles by the author's names.

a short lion simile within the traditional caesurae of the hexameter line will illustrate the wide flexibility possessed by the poet:

Nominative:	ὥστε λέ	-ων				λέ -ων ὥς		
		ὥσ	-τε λέ-	ων			λέ	-ων ὥς
	ὡς δ' ὅτε	τίς	τε λέ	-ων				
			ὥς	τίς	τε	λέ -ων		
Accusative:					λέ	-ον- θ' ὥς		
							ὥς τε λέ	-οντα
Dual:	οἴω	τώ	γε λέ -	ον	-τε			
		ὥσ	-τε λέ -	ον	-τε			
	– ∪ ∪	–	∪ ∪	–	∪	∪ – ∪ ∪	– ∪ ∪	– –
	A²	A¹		B²	B¹	C¹		
	1		2		3	4	5	6

Some of these basic units appear alone, but each is extended into a longer simile. It is instructive to see the many different ways in which the phrase "like a lion" or "like two lions" can be adapted to fit into a line; in effect, with a little variation in surrounding words the poet can sing the simile "like a lion" in any of the hexameter line's four cola.[28] The words which are added or subtracted in each individual occurrence are merely methods of adapting the basic formula to suit various metrical configurations.

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[28] There are two entries on this chart which appear to be outside the normal colometric structure: λέων ὥς ending at 12 and ὥς τίς τε λέων ending at 7. There are two examples of λέων ὥς ending the line (11.129 and 20.164) even though Porter's Table Va shows that *ls/sl/l* or *s* is one of the least common metrical patterns in the fourth colon. There is further indication that this phrase is difficult to introduce neatly into the line: the same two words precede each occurrence ("ἐναντίον ὦρτο λέων ὥς"). The second phrase ὥς τίς τε λέων is always filled out by a preposition (*s s*) which makes this pattern the second most prevalent in this position according to Porter's Table IVa. λέων ὥς remains a difficult phrase to reconcile with colometric structure; the rest of the examples seem to fit neatly within the standard cola of the line and thus privide wide opportunity for a poet to insert the phrase "like a lion".

Whenever the poet felt that the shorter simile was inadequate for the effect he desired, he could extend it. An example of this type of extension is seen in a comparison of the following passages:

τοὺς ἐξῆγε θύραζε τεθηπότας ἠΰτε νεβρούς,
δῆσε δ' ὀπίσσω χεῖρας ἐϋτμήτοισιν ἱμᾶσι

These he led out of the water bewildered like fawns and he bound their hands behind them with well-cut thongs . . .

(21.29-30)

ὣς οἱ μὲν κατὰ ἄστυ πεφυζότες ἠΰτε νεβροὶ
ἱδρῶ ἀπεψύχοντο πίον τ' ἀκέοντό τε δίψαν

Throughout the town these men, who had fled like fawns, dried off their sweat and drank and quenched their thirst . . .

(22.1-2)

οὕς τινας αὖ μεθιέντας ἴδοι στυγεροῦ πολέμοιο,
τοὺς μάλα νεικείεσκε χολωτοῖσιν ἐπέεσσιν·
"Ἀργεῖοι ἰόμωροι, ἐλεγχέες, οὔ νυ σέβεσθε;
τίφθ' οὕτως ἕστητε τεθηπότες ἠΰτε νεβροί,
αἵ τ' ἐπεὶ οὖν ἔκαμον πολέος πεδίοιο θέουσαι,
ἑστᾶσ', οὐδ' ἄρα τίς σφι μετὰ φρεσὶ γίγνεται ἀλκή.
ὣς ὑμεῖς ἕστητε τεθηπότες, οὐδὲ μάχεσθε.
ἦ μένετε Τρῶας σχεδὸν ἐλθέμεν, ἔνθα τε νῆες
εἰρύατ' εὔπρυμνοι, πολιῆς ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης,
ὄφρα ἴδητ' αἴ κ' ὔμμιν ὑπέρσχῃ χεῖρα Κρονίων;

Any he might see holding back from the hateful fighting he would reproach with angry words: "You Argives, puny bowmen, disgraces, have you no shame? Why do you stand here bewildered like fawns, who when they have exhausted themselves racing over a great plain, stand still and there is no strength left in their hearts? In such a way you stand there bewildered and do not fight. Are you waiting for the Trojans to come close up to the shore of the grey sea, where the well-built ships lie protected, so that you may see if Zeus will hold his hand over you?"

(4.240-249)

In each case the poet is singing about men who are afraid, and there is only one simile subject which is used in such scenes, deer.[29] In all

[29] See Chart 2, supra, p. 87.

three passages the poet has chosen a simile describing deer which fills out the line beginning at the Bucolic diaeresis. There is only one other simile of deer at 13.101 which does not use this position in the line or, in fact, the word νεβροί. In the similes from Books 21 and 4 the poet seems to have begun the formula at the third trochee with the addition of the word τεθηπότες/ας, but this construction is deceptive. The word τεθηπότες/ας with this precise metrical configuration occurs four times in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[30] In each case it falls exactly at this position in the line: according to Porter's analysis, between the B^1 caesura and the C^1 caesura occupying five morae. In addition Porter points out that a single word of this configuration at this point in the line occurs more often than any other series of syllables broken by various kinds of caesurae (Table IVA). O'Neill's study demonstrates that words of the type *s-l-s-s* occur more than ninety-five per cent of the time at this position in the line (Table 11). Thus both essays offer evidence that the word τεθηπότες/ας would tend to be placed in this position regardless of the phrase following the Bucolic diaeresis; in fact, the word τεθηπότες/ας is used in the third colon of the line independently of the deer simile in lines 4.246 and Od. 24. 392. The short simile ἠΰτε νεβροί/ούς seems a unit which is independent of the word τεθηπότες/ας, although certainly the two units can be combined whenever the poet wishes.

This analysis shows the technique of building lines in miniature: the poet strings together words and phrases standing independently in other passages to make a "new" scene. He does not compose as much in individual words as he does in formuliac units of language, often of standard length, most of which tend to fill the traditional cola of the line. One way of introducing the word νεβροί/ούς into a line was to wait until the last colon and then sing the phrase ἠΰτε νεβροί/ούς. Since this word began at the Bucolic diaeresis there were numerous words which could be placed before it like τεθηπότες/ας or πεφυζότες (22.1) or many of the other words which occur in the third colon. But the choice of this word was a separate decision on the part of the composing poet; the irreducible formulaic element is the short simile which fills the fourth colon.

It is worth spending time on this example because it is in the smaller samples of the oral style that the evidence is the clearest,

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30 4.243, 4.246, 21.29, and Od. 24.392.

since when one turns to the longer phrases and whole lines, very often he finds that there are not enough parallels to separate formulaic blocks with any confidence. The greatest problem is the variation possible within any one formula. In the above passages the shift from τεθνηότες to τεθνηότας is easy to see. When two or three words are involved, each of which can shift its ending, the formula becomes harder to identify. When, in addition, the phrase is one which is not as firmly localized in the third colon as τεθνηότες/ας, then the difficulties in distinguishing exactly what part of the line is formulaic mount rapidly.[31] In treating the structure of the longer similes it is important to bear these problems in mind since because of them, conclusions cannot be as precise as desired, and often one must be content with identifying tendencies rather than establishing patterns. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to arrive at a general understanding of the poet's method in constructing his similes.

The difficulties in defining structural units become immediately apparent in examining the extension of the basic deer simile at 4.244:

1. ὅς / οἵ / αἵ τ'/δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν—This phrase fills the line through Porter's A¹ caesura. It is a phrase that is paralleled ample times and seems to be an independent formulaic unit as, for example, 1.57, 3.4, 15.363, and others.

2. ἔκαμον—This verb occupies the second colon completing the line up to the B² caesura. There is no type of parallel use which would establish this as a formula since the greater tendency is for words of this configuration to end at position 5 than at position 7 in the *Iliad*, though not in the *Odyssey*, according to O'Neill's Table Seven.[32] Most probably there is not enough information to

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[31] On the whole question of defining the formula see J. B. Hainsworth *op. cit.* (supra, n. 15), "Structure and Content in Epic Formulae: The Question of the Unique Expression," *CQ* 14 (1964), pp. 155-164, and *The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula* (Oxford 1968), J. A. Russo, "A Closer Look at Homeric Formulas," *TAPhA* 94 (1963), pp. 235-247 and "The Structural Formula in Homeric Verse," *YCS* 20 (1966), pp. 219-240, William W. Minton, "The Fallacy of the Structural Formula," *TAPhA* 96 (1965), pp. 241-253, and Michael N. Nagler, *Formula and Motif in the Homeric Epics: Prolegomena to an Aesthetics of Oral Poetry* (Diss. Berkeley, 1966).

[32] Cf. also J. A. Russo *op. cit.* "The Structural Formula..." (supra, n. 31).

establish anything formulaic about the poet's choice of this word or its position. It seems to be present in the line independently of the words before and after it.

3. πολέος πεδίοιο θέουσαι—The phrase πολέος πεδίοιο extends one syllable further than Porter's C² caesura in ending at 9 1/2; however this is not unheard of in Porter's system, and the phrase does comply with his comments on the inner dynamics of the line by avoiding the caesura at 7 1/2.[33] Though there is a close parallel to the whole phrase at 23.521: πολέος πεδίοιο θέοντος, this is the only parallel passage which groups the two units together. πολέος πεδίοιο is used three times in this metrical position in the Homeric poems, and once at position 12 (4.244, 23.475, 23.521; 5.597). Because it is associated with the participle θέουσαι/θέοντος only twice and because this participle occurs elsewhere at the end of the line preceded by other words, two separate units are probably involved.

4. ἑστᾶσ'—This and other forms of the verb ἵστημι occur frequently at the very beginning of the sentence. The verb in this form fills the line up to the A² caesura, one of the more common places in the line for a word which is a spondee according to Table Six in O'Neill's study. Following this word in its appearances in the *Iliad* there is a new beginning in the form of a relative clause or another independent clause though no formulaic usage is involved either preceding this word in the previous line or following it. It does fill one of the standard cola. There seems every indication, then, that this word is a unit in itself and is not tied to any traditional phraseology when used in this simile.

5. οὐδ' ἄρα τίς σφι—This is one of those phrases which is hard to trace as being formulaic. οὐδ' ἄρα is fixed, but the other two components can be varied in so many ways that it is difficult to cite exact parallels. The phrase does operate in accordance with the traditional divisions of the line by closing out the colon which ends at the B² caesura.

6. μετὰ φρεσί—This phrase fills in the line up to the C¹ caesura. It falls in this position countless times in both poems; for example,

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In the Appendix of Common Structural Formula (I.B. 4) he lists verbs of the shape *s s l* als common occurrences before the B caesura.

[33] G. S. Kirk points out the weakness of Porter's C² caesura in "Studies in Some Technical Aspects of Homeric Style: The Structure of the Homeric Hexameter," *YCS* 20 (1966), pp. 73-104.

9.434, 14.264, and 18.463. It is a small unit unto itself in that it seems to determine neither what goes before it nor what follows.

7. γίγνεται ἀλκή—This phrase occurs twice, here and at 15.490. Throughout the poems the word ἀλκή occurs almost always as the last word of the line, according to O'Neill's Table Six, the favored position for words which are spondees. Many different sorts of words fall before ἀλκή in this position. γίγνεται is a dactyl and falls in this line where a dactyl is expected (cf. O'Neill's Table Eight). Since both words seem to lead a separate existence, each obeying its own laws, there appears to be no formula here.

This analysis of a somewhat disappointing passage demonstrates the problems inherent in studying the structure of the simile. First, it is quite difficult and often impossible to determine clearly what is a formulaic unit (one key word or idea determining the choice of other words), a metrical preference (metrical configuration influencing the placement of the word), or an individual choice (the poet's joining of two words which might well have been separated). αἵ τ' ἐπεὶ οὖν is most probably a formulaic unit which could be repeated in this position by the poet almost without thinking. μετὰ φρεσί seems to fall in its place in the line because of metrical habit; or, stating the same phenomenon negatively, the phrase μετὰ φρεσί occurs often with many different kinds of words surrounding it, but it occurs at no other place in the line. πολέος πεδίοιο θέουσαι seems to be a combination which was made by the poet from groups of words which are identifiable from their usage in other passages as independent units; the joining of the two units is a choice by the poet which seems determined by no formulaic or traditional custom.

Second, it is significant that the simile seems to be as much a product of the oral tradition as any other part of the Homeric poems.[34] The words are by no means unusual since most have parallels in both narrative and simile sections of the poems and often

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[34] That simile and narrative are equally representative of the oral tradition is only to be expected from the nature of oral recitation and the limitations which the audience places upon the poet. Cf. C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (Oxford, 1942), p. 20: "A line which gives the listener pause is a disaster in oral poetry because it makes him lose the next line. And even if he does not lose the next, the rare and ebullient line is not worth making. In the sweep of recitation *no* individual line is going to count for very much."

have even been used in similar positions regardless of context. If it is accepted that O'Neill and Porter have successfully delineated the basic structure of the hexameter line, then it seems that the phrasing of this simile conforms very closely to the units which they have established on the basis of a narrative passage. The two studies demonstrate that the hexameter line tends to fall into four fairly standard cola in both oral and written verse; but only in oral verse would the words which fill these cola be repeated so formulaically. Nothing in the phrasing or construction of the individual lines of this simile suggests a composition other than oral.[35]

Finally, it seems that the study of the formulae which make up the individual line is probably less important than an understanding of the grammatical structure of the total simile, once it is granted that the similes are a product of oral composition.[36] The difficulties in defining the basic formulae in the similes are so great and the results so imprecise that it is impractical here to delve into the language of the similes beyond an admission that each phrase and individual line is deeply rooted in the language of oral composition.

The work of Porter and O'Neill defines the types of phrasing characteristic of dactylic verse and can be meaningfully applied to the limited sample of formulaic or repeated simile language which we possess. Parry's technique of formulaic analysis, however, requires more repetitions of precise wording in similar positions than the extant body of simile material can provide.

What can be determined about the formulaic quality of the simile's language has been established in another study and is borne out fully in the analysis of the deer simile.[37] It now remains to

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[35] Compare the analysis of the formulaic nature of the simile at 20.164 by A. B. Lord, "Homer as Oral Poet," *HSCP* 72 (1967) 1-46 on p. 28. In this whole study is concerned with methods of identifying oral verse. The analysis of this simile demonstrates the density of formulae in an oral style.

[36] This statement is supported by A. B. Lord's analysis of the growth and interest of the poet in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge 1960), p. 36: "There is some justification for saying indeed that the particular formula itself is important to the singer only up to the time when it has planted in his mind its basic mold. When this point is reached, the singer depends less and less on learning formulas and more and more on the process of substituting other words in the formula patterns."

[37] J. C. Hogan, *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile* (Diss. Cornell, 1966). It was surprising to me to find this dissertation with the same title as mine shortly after I had finished my degree; while Hogan's general conclusions are the same, his method of argumentation differs. He focuses on the internal structure of the simile to prove the oral quality of its composition. He

examine the broader grammatical structure of the lines which extend the part-line simile.

Twice the basic short simile ἠΰτε νεβροί/ούς is sufficient for the poet's purpose, but on one occasion the poet chose to extend this basic simile. He began the extended line with a relative pronoun, the verb of which followed in the next line. To fill out the first line of extension he inserted a clause introduced by ἐπεί; in the second line he added a clause beginning with οὐδέ. It is clear from the repeated adjective τεθηπότες/ας at 21.29 that the added relative clause and the οὐδέ clause are not vital to the meaning of the simile. As far as the meaning of the passage is concerned, the longer deer simile could be placed in Book 21 and no one would find the ideas unintelligible:

> And when his hands had grown tired of killing, he chose twelve young men out of the river as expiation for the dead Patroclus, the son of Menoetius. These he led out of the water like bewildered fawns . . .
>
> who, when they have exhausted themselves racing over a great plain, stand still and there is no strength left in their hearts.
>
> (21.26-29 + 4.244-45)

The poet does not become involved in complicated subordination within a simile; the clauses are added one by one so that the poet could stop at the end of any one clause without vitally affecting the meaning.

It seems that the poet decided to extend the simile by considering the needs of each individual context. In Book 4 the poet reports an exasperated speech of Agamemnon in which the general states again and again that the Argives holding back from battle are cowards: "Have you no shame? Why are you standing there? You

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defines the extent to which formulae can be found in the similes and the relation of these formulae to the narrative sections of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He also shows in detail the additive and autonomous nature of the units by which the basic simile is extended. His conclusions fit very well with mine as is evident in this quotation: "The paratactic style is agreed to be characteristic of oral poetry, and we have seen much evidence of this style in the similes. Not only do formulae tend to be arranged appositionally, but even those phrases for which we have no exact parallel are organized by the same principle. Even in cases of two and three line enjambment, which are significantly few, the inner elements are likely to be appositional expansions of the motif rather than particular expressions of a complex whole." (p. 194).

are not fighting. Are you waiting to see if some god will protect you?" In such a series of questions the simile illustrates graphically the feelings of cowardice which are being emphasized in the direct questions with a switch to the feminine gender in line 244 which is a part of the insult that would not be conveyed by the simple short simile. The extending lines in this simile make the taunts of the commander all the more biting. When such a point is, however, relatively minor in terms of the central idea of narrative or does not need extra emphasis, as in books 21 and 22, then the poet is content with a short simile. In both passages with short deer similes the simile aids the poet in expressing the psychological state of the men, but there is no need for the poet to stress these scenes. The men led away to be sacrificed to Patroclus are sufficiently insignificant beings in the scope of the whole poem that they probably do not merit a lengthy simile. At 22.1 there is a general view of the two armies before the narrative turns to the two protagonists, Hector and Achilles. This would be the wrong place to overemphasize the two armies which will immediately fall into the background.

All the oral features of the deer simile—the choice of words, the formulaic phrasing, the adherence to the dynamics of the hexameter line, and the additive nature of the individual extending members—can be paralleled in various passages within the narrative. Thus this simile is certainly a product of oral composition. One swallow has yet to make a summer, and this single simile is inadequate as a foundation for sweeping conclusions concerning the composition of all similes. However, the close analysis of this one simile makes evident the terms of broader investigation. To present an analysis of all similes in such detail is impossible; more profitable is an examination of various types of similes illustrating in special ways the general application of the points which I have made about this one simile.

Of primary interest again are the repeated similes, which seem to be units that could be used at will. They were not built clause on clause as the poet sang, but were chosen as a block with some change allowed within the simile. Even though they were carried in the mind as autonomous units by the poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, they still bear unmistakable marks of their oral origin. The simile of the hungering lion at 11.548 (which almost equals 17.657) is again a useful example because of the variation in the initial lines:

ὡς δ' αἴθωνα λέοντα βοῶν ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιο
ἐσσεύαντο κύνες τε καὶ ἀνέρες ἀγροιῶται,
οἵ τέ μιν οὐκ εἰῶσι βοῶν ἐκ πῖαρ ἑλέσθαι
πάννυχοι ἐγρήσσοντες· ὁ δὲ κρειῶν ἐρατίζων
ἰθύει, ἀλλ' οὔ τι πρήσσει· θαμέες γὰρ ἄκοντες
ἀντίον ἀΐσσουσι θρασειάων ἀπὸ χειρῶν,
καιόμεναί τε δεταί, τάς τε τρεῖ ἐσσύμενός περ·
ἠῶθεν δ' ἀπονόσφιν ἔβη τετιηότι θυμῷ.
ὣς Αἴας τότ' ἀπὸ Τρώων τετιημένος ἦτορ

(11.548-556)

βῆ δ' ἰέναι ὥς τίς τε λέων ἀπὸ μεσσαύλοιο,
ὅς τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ κε κάμῃσι κύνας τ' ἄνδρας τ' ἐρεθίζων,
οἵ τέ μιν οὐκ εἰῶσι βοῶν ἐκ πῖαρ ἑλέσθαι . . .

(17.657-659)

Here is an analysis of these lines broken down into grammatical units:

11.548—Object. Prepositional phrase.	17.657—Subject. Prepositional phrase
11.549—Verb. Subject	17.658—Relative. Subordinate clause introduced by ἐπεί. Participial phrase.

11.550 (17.659)—Relative clause.
11.551 (17.660)—Participle. Clause introduced by δέ. Participle.
11.552 (17.661)—Verb of δέ clause. Clause introduced by ἀλλά. Clause introduced by γάρ.
11.553 (17.662)—Verb of γάρ clause. Prepositional phrase.
11.554 (17.663)—Subject added to above γάρ clause. Relative clause. Participle.
11.555 (17.664)—Clause introduced by δέ.

There are a number of important features to note in the construction of this simile. First, it is composed in terms of the individual line. There are only two places where the repeated portion of the simile must run over into the next line, 551 and 552, and in these two lines the enjambment is necessary because a clause has been begun which lacks a verb. That simile could be stopped at the end of the other lines and joined to the narrative by a line like 556 is one indication of the looseness of structure.

Closely related is the method by which the poet extends the simile. It is not in form a series of lines each of which ends with a period. There is enjambment, some necessary and some not. The basic tools of unperiodic enjambment are the free verbal idea (dependent clause, participal phrase, or genitive absolute), the adjectival idea, the adverbial idea, and the coordinate clause.[38] These types of extension avoid complicated subordination. There are numerous subordinating conjunctions in the epic language, but they are only infrequently used to build a more complex sentence. The only grammatically complex connection in the lion simile is contained in the word γάρ which introduces a clause giving the reason for the failure of the lion.[39]

In effect, this simile is built from part-line units, each bound by strong thematic affinity but by weak grammatical ties to the preceding unit. The pressures of adhering to the hexameter line while creating sentences longer than the single line compel the oral poet to rely on a proven traditional language. The method of composing in this language, namely stringing small units together to express full thoughts, is inherently bound to an intransigence in regard to subordination. These two qualities of Homeric verse, the adherence to the traditional units of diction and the dominance of the hexameter line, reinforce each other, and both are natural enemies of complexity in grammatical structure.[40]

A further indication of the lack of organic unity within each simile is evident at line 17.658. There the poet introduces a single subordi-

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[38] M. Parry, "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," *TAPhA* 60 (1929), pp. 200-220, esp. 206-7. Cf. M. W. Edwards, "Some Features of Homeric Craftsmanship." *TAPhA* 97 (1966), pp. 115-179

[39] Cf. Parry *op. cit.* (supra, n. 38), p. 215: "... Homer was ever pushed on to use unperiodic enjambement. Oral versemaking by its speed must be chiefly carried on in an adding style. The Singer has not time for the nice balances and contrasts of unhurried thought: he must order his words in such a way that they leave him much freedom to end the sentence or draw it out as the story and the needs of the verse demand."

[40] This was noted by Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," *TAPhA* 80 (1949), pp. 1-23, in regard to parataxis throughout the Homeric poems: "The imperious domination of the immediate verse and episode shapes in large measure the paratactic style as well as content of the oral epic... The poet thus tends to become episodic in his mentality because of his verbal technique." (p. 15)

This article, basic to any study of parataxis in oral poetry, is a constant aid in analysing the structure of the similes.

nate clause with two introductory subordinating words. Here is Mr. Leaf's comment:

> The Epic poet, always intolerant of long subordinate clauses, seems to use his two relatives at the beginning to indicate the general drift of his sentence and then does not attempt to follow out the details. Here ὅς is the necessary copula introducing the working out of the simile, and ἐπεί proclaims that the clause headed by it is preliminary and does not contain the real comparison. Having thus announced its subordinate character, the clause can proceed in its . . . development as though it has begun . . . without any parade of relatives.

Leaf and Chantraine point to parallel confusion at 8.229 ff., 18.55 f. and 24.42 f.[41] Such examples demonstrate how insignificant subordinating words are to the oral poet. He is, in fact, working with a series of language units, each of which adds to the length of the simile, and thereby, further defines the tone of the small story which he is telling. The individual particulars of the scene are sung for the most part as though they were an unconnected series of incidents, and it is up to the listener to organize these items into a coherent, organic image.

Paratactic structure is apparent in all the repeated similes. Since these similes had been used often enough to stick in the poet's mind, it might be expected that they would show signs of attempts to organize and polish their somewhat loose structural form. However, these similes, which belong to some of the most common simile families, tend to retain their loose, additive structure in spite of continued usage.

The majority of similes in the Homeric corpus are similar in their structure to the deer and lion similes which have just been discussed. Instead of multiplying examples of the same type, it is more profitable to examine those similes which are for two reasons exceptional: either they demonstrate examples of the additive technique which are different from the normal type of extension as seen above, or they are rare passages where the rules of Greek grammar are strained or broken because of the paratactic method of composition. These two topics will be discussed together because both phenomena

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41 Chantraine II, p. 361 f.

can often be well illustrated on the basis of a single simile. These few similes, which show the unusual results or the extreme consequences of oral composition, offer sound evidence of the poet's willing acceptance of the advantages, but also of the dangers, of additive construction.

There is one further technique of extending the simile which is quite common, the list which can consist of individual physical objects or several clauses. The clearest example is 14.394:

> οὔτε θαλάσσης κῦμα τόσον βοάᾳ ποτὶ χέρσον,
> ποντόθεν ὀρνύμενον πνοιῇ Βορέω ἀλεγεινῇ·
> οὔτε πυρὸς τόσσος γε ποτὶ βρόμος αἰθομένοιο
> οὔρεος ἐν βήσσῃς, ὅτε τ' ὤρετο καιέμεν ὕλην·
> οὔτ' ἄνεμος τόσσον γε περὶ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισι
> ἠπύει, ὅς τε μάλιστα μέγα βρέμεται χαλεπαίνων
> ὅσση ἄρα Τρώων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν ἔπλετο φωνὴ . . .

> The two sides came together with a great war cry. Not so loud does the sea wave echo on the shore as it is driven from the open sea by the fierce blasts of the north wind, nor so loud is the roaring of a burning fire in the ravines of a mountain when it rises to burn the forest, nor so loudly does the wind shriek through the tall oaks when it roars angrily, not so loud as the cries of the Trojans and Achaeans . . .

This long simile-like section is really three fairly short similes, each complete in itself. Each individual simile is composed in an additive style: the first extended by a participial phrase; the second by a prepositional phrase and an additional clause; and the third, by a verb carried over from the preceding line which is then followed by a relative clause. It is clear that the poet could have stopped at the end of each of these similes, sung a connecting line (e.g., 400), and continued on with the narrative. Most probably the series of similes is intended to emphasize the "mighty din" with which the armies ran together and the "terrible shouts" that accompany their fighting (393 and 401); a single simile was not considered sufficient. A poet who was writing would have elaborated upon the basic subject in one long simile, but an oral poet, who thought in terms of added units, would feel it natural to extend his simile by the addition of clauses of any kind as long as they reinforced the main theme of

his narrative—in this case, as long as they continued the idea of the horrendous noise of battle. Wind and fire are two traditional subjects for expressing the noise of groups, and rather than choosing either one of these two images to develop, the poet decided that he would use both.[42] In fact, he used one of them twice.

There are also numerous examples of similes extended by listing individual objects which offer an alternative. For example:

> ὥς τε λέων ἐχάρη μεγάλῳ ἐπὶ σώματι κύρσας,
> εὑρὼν ἢ ἔλαφον κεραὸν ἢ ἄγριον αἶγα
> πεινάων·[43]
>
> he rejoiced as does a lion coming upon a large carcass, finding either a horned stag or a wild goat in his hunger . . .
>
> (3.23-25)
>
> οἱ δ' ὥς τ' ἢ ἔλαφον κεραὸν ἢ ἄγριον αἶγα
> ἐσσεύαντο κύνες τε καὶ ἀνέρες ἀγροιῶται
>
> just as dogs and country men have chased either a horned stag or a wild goat . . .
>
> (15.271-72)

In each case a direct object is needed; the poet extends his simile by giving his listeners a choice that interestingly does not seem especially significant since the narrative situation does not specifically require one of these two alternatives nor does the further development of either simile. The repetition of the phrase in the later simile renders the substance of the choice all the more questionable. Most probably this is a metrically suitable pair of animals to be used as prey in a hunting scene. The poet is not primarily concerned about the true representation of nature but wants to build his line by making his simile longer since the simile becomes, thereby, more noticeable and more effective. The list—whether in whole similes or clauses or in smaller part-line items—is the archetypal unsubordinated, autonomous, paratactic unit. Further examples

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[42] See Chart 2, supra, p. 87.

[43] See C. J. Ruijgh, *Autour de "te Épique"* (Amsterdam 1971), p. 589 for a discussion of the unusual way in which this simile is joined to the surrounding narrative.

may be found at 2.459, 10.5,[44] 10.360, 13.389=16.482, 15.605, 15.690, 16.589, 17.547, 17.742, 22.134, 22.308, and Od. 11.413.

The simile at 16.384 illustrates the use of parataxis in the development of a long simile. This simile is extended for nine lines and could be stopped at the end of any of eight of these lines since only the second line runs over into the third for its subject. The method of extension involves prepositional phrases, relative clauses, and independent clauses introduced by δέ. What is most notable in this simile is the looseness in the development of the thought as the narrative within the simile moves further and further from the initial subject. It seems that the poet could extend his simile line by line adhering to a miniature story or scene provided that the simile was short enough; but when he was called upon to extend the simile beyond a few lines, the paratactic structure began to dominate and the unconnected nature of the poet's thinking became more and more evident. In the first four lines of this long simile there is subordination: the earth is hard pressed by a whirlwind *when* Zeus sends rain *when* he is angered at men. The subordination is not as complete as it would be in a written style, but the two "when's" do bind the three clauses together as being simultaneous. From this point on the subordination becomes looser. He is angered at men *who* give crooked judgments —not *because* they give crooked judgments. Line 389 reads: "and the rivers of these are filled with rushing floods." "The rivers of these" is an odd phrase in itself; however in the sentence it is so abrupt that there is some question about its antecedent. Leaf states:

> τῶν must mean 'the rivers of these men,' a strange expression, but less harsh than the alternative which regards τῶν as referring in a collective sense to ὕδωρ above, 'these floods.'

Leaf entertains the possibility of an interpolator; in view of the demands of oral composition it is more likely that this phrase has its antecedent in the general subject of the previous lines, the men. The poet added a line in a perfectly traditional and admittedly

[44] The lack of logical connectives and subordination seems to have bothered Leaf, among others, in regard to this simile: (on 10.8) "The simile runs on as though 'the mighty mouth of war' were a natural phenomenon, differing about as much from a snow-storm as a snow-storm from a hail-storm." He then tries to see some logic in this list: "The idea may be that if the lightning is not accompanied by (1) rain, (2) hail, or (3) snow, it must be a portent of war. This seems to place a high importance on 'summer-lightning.' But it is hopeless to criticise such an incompetent piece of expression."

paratactic way: "τῶν δέ τε." He knew what connection he wanted his audience to draw, and he, therefore, extended the simile one more line using the type of demonstrative article which he had often used before. Such a style may bother those who read the text searching for the tightness of a literary style, but to an oral poet this technique is sanctioned by centuries of use.[45]

The rest of the clauses in this simile are added loosely with little attempt at subordination. There is one participle, "ῥέουσαι," which requires a subject from the preceding clause, but this is a very minimal connection. With the exception of this one participle each clause in the second half of this simile stands by itself, not depending on any reference to surrounding clauses for understanding. In the course of the simile there is a development from some slight subordination to a total abandonment of the attempt.

A similar dissipating of connectives is evident at 12.278; snowflakes fall when Zeus decides to send snow to the earth. The remainder of the simile is a list of places on which the snow falls and one where it does not. The last five lines are joined by "καί's" with a slight connection in the final line.[46] Further examples are 20.164 and Od. 19.109.

At 3.2 there is an adaptation of the paratactic style:

> Τρῶες μὲν κλαγγῇ τ' ἐνοπῇ τ' ἴσαν, ὄρνιθες ὥς,
> ἠύτε περ κλαγγὴ γεράνων πέλει οὐρανόθι πρό,
> αἵ τ' ἐπεὶ οὖν χειμῶνα φύγον καὶ ἀθέσφατον ὄμβρον

> The Trojans came on with shouting and crying like birds, just as when the cries of cranes rise up to the heavens when they fly before the winter . . .

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[45] Both G. W. Nitzsch and Leaf find weakness in the structure of this simile. Nitzsch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Epischen Poesie der Griechen* (Leipzig 1862), p. 342, is troubled by the τῶν in line 389 which he feels refers to the waters in 385; he would excise the intervening lines 386-388. Leaf (on 16. 387-88) finds many reasons for the spuriousness of the two lines 387-88; among his reasons one shows the kind of criticism which is not prepared to accept a loose, additive structure: the couplet ". . . entirely spoils the balance of the simile by laying weight on a point which is far removed from the required picture."

[46] E. H. Friedländer, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der homerischen Gleichnisse* (Berlin 1870), II, p. 24 f. felt the growing looseness of this simile. He thought that the effect of the simile had been accomplished by line 280; if line 287 followed immediately, there would be a close connection between simile and narrative—especially in the parallel structure of line 278 and 287. The

The poet first chooses, as a short simile to fill out the line from the Bucolic diaeresis, a phrase which is repeated in the accusative case one other time at 2.764 in the same position. There it is a short simile while here the simile is extended but not by adding another clause within the simile structure. Rather the simile is begun again. In form this passage contains two similes repeated one after the other, both on the subject of birds either of which could be removed and leave the sense of the lines intact. However the poet wanted a long simile in this place, and since neither grammatical subordination nor verbal economy are dominant concerns, the poet chose from among the available phrases and then strung these phrases together to make a long simile. In an oral presentation the audience probably did not listen closely enough to be bothered by the double introduction; they would be more impressed by the length of the total simile on the birds. The proper punctation at the beginning of this simile in a written style would probably be a dash. In an oral style, however, the simile can be built from additive units which are not only loosely connected but in this case, even repetitive.[47] A further example occurs at 11.546 and 548.

Related to the simile which is double in form is the simile which is single in form but double in content. Homer or a later interpolator has been accused of conflating two similes at 16.259 in the simile of the wasps who have been irritated by children and who may attack a traveller, since there seems little connection between the children and the traveller.[48] In the simile itself the grammatical

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material in between (281-286) merely weakened the point of the simile. Once again this is criticism not written with an eye to paratactic composition.

[47] Ruijgh (see above, note 43) p. 854 feels that the poet quite naturally forgot to add a concluding phrase joining the simile back to the narrative because he had already indicated the connection at 3.2. This idea is quite in keeping with the additive manner of composition common to most similes. The unusual form of two juxtaposed similes modifying the same narrative object may explain the poet's confusion.

[48] The double nature of this simile has received much attention. L. Friedländer, "Doppelte Recensionen in *Ilias* und *Odyssee*," *Philologus* 4 (1849), pp. 577-591 on 586 f. and G. W. Nitzsch, *Sagenpoesie*, pp. 141 and 168 remove the beginning of the simile and leave the traveller section as the true heart of the simile. Fränkel, p. 72 and G. Jachmann, *Der homerische Schiffskatalog und die Ilias* (Koln und Opladen 1958), p. 329 ff. also see two similes combined although the process of combination is different in each man's view. For a defense of the unity of the simile see J. T. Kakridis, "Das Wespengleichnis im 16 der *Ilias*," *Hermes* 88 (1960), p. 250-253 with a Zusatz by S. G. Kapsomenos.

connection between the two sections is slight;[49] at line 263 there is a new clause joined to the previous line by a δέ. Such connections are common, but this one happens to be especially noticeable because two diverse times and sets of characters are combined in the simile.[50] Admittedly there is nothing inconsistent about the description. When this simile is judged in terms of a written style, it seems chaotic; though in comparison with other similes, it is not unusual in terms of structure or organization of material.

Who then imposes unity on the scattered elements of the simile? The answer is the audience. The poet selects a subject which has certain objects customarily joined to it, and then sings about several of these objects in themselves, seldom joining the various particulars together into an orderly picture. Many of the similes do describe occurrences and sights which are eternally familiar and are, therefore, a common experience shared by both poet and audience. This common experience provides a natural ordering of the individual items or events of the simile into a sensible relationship; but that ordering is not accomplished by the grammar of the poet, but rather by the recollected experience of the members of the audience.[51]

There is no internal demand decreeing the development—either in direction or in length—of the individual simile. The simile of the wasps contains an example of a participial phrase which extends the simile a half-line but merely repeats information from the preceding line:

αὐτίκα δὲ σφήκεσσιν ἐοικότες ἐξεχέοντο
εἰνοδίοις, οὓς παῖδες ἐριδμαίνωσιν ἔθοντες,
αἰεὶ κερτομέοντες, ὁδῷ ἔπι οἰκί' ἔχοντας . . .

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[49] Chantraine II 355 comments on the looseness of the grammatical consistency within this simile but admits that paratactic structure is constant in the similes.

[50] Cf. B. E. Perry, "The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately," *TAPhA* 68 (1937), pp. 403-427, concerning the Homeric simile: "It is a familiar fact that the poet is not always content to illustrate just the particular point for which the comparison is made; often, through concentration upon the image before him, he adds details that have nothing to do with the narrative and which do not belong logically in the comparison." (p. 414).

[51] Notopoulos *op. cit.* (supra, n. 40), p. 21 in speaking of the relation of the individual performance to the traditional epic story defines a similar cooperative role for the audience: "The poet selects his material and the unity of the larger whole may be in the minds of the audience, as Bassett has so skilfully shown... The oral recitation thus becomes a selection of parts whose whole is the inexpressed context of the traditional material."

> immediately they poured forth like wasps which live by the side of the road which children are in the habit of angering, always teasing them as they live by the side of the road . . .
> (16.259-261)

Basic economy would dictate the omission of either the adjective εἰνοδίοις or the phrase at the end of 261; but economy is not the main concern of the oral poet.[52] He can introduce any kind of line or any kind of information which he feels is suitable to the tone he is trying to evoke. Thus call a line irrelevant or inconsistent is impossible, provided that the line in question is minimally suitable to the poet's imagined picture. The loose structure of the simile both in individual lines and in blocks of lines prods the audience into structuring the story by ordering, subordinating, and, in this case, conflating the elements of the simile scene while the poet keeps his focus moving from item to item.[53] This sharing of the responsiblity for communication is not unique to the simile since all paratactic structures make this demand on their audiences.[54]

The pressures of oral composition have even exacted their toll on the most basic rules of grammar. At 8.306 there is a clause with no verb:

> μήκων δ' ὡς ἑτέρωσε κάρη βάλεν, ἥ τ' ἐνὶ κήπῳ,
> καρπῷ βριθομένη νοτίῃσί τε εἰαρινῇσιν,
> ὣς ἑτέρωσ' ἤμυσε κάρη πήληκι βαρυνθέν

> And he bowed his head to one side like a poppy which in a garden weighted down with fruit and spring rain; thus he bowed to one side . . .

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[52] As Notopoulos *op. cit.* (supra, n. 40), p. 20 has said: ". . . the audience's interest is the poet's interest, and it may be stated as a cardinal principle in oral literature that the interest of the audience rather than concern for the structure of his material is the object of the poet."

[53] Cf. S. E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley 1938), p. 128: "The best efforts of the poet may fail if the listener does not contribute his share in the telling of the tale."

[54] Cf. J. A. Notopoulos, "Studies in Early Greek Oral Poetry," *HSCP* 68 (1964), pp. 1-77: "The seeming discreteness of the elements of the structure of the *Works and Days* does not make the poem inorganic from the point of view of the Boeotian farmer whose life and problems enter into it. The loose parataxis of the poem must not have bothered Hesiod's audience as much as it does the scholar. Hesiod could make jumps and abrupt transitions with an audience that held in its mind the necessary knowledge of interconnection." (p. 51 f.).

It is easy to borrow a verb for the relative clause from the preceding clause or merely to insert the verb ἐστί.[55] However there are enough parallels to the relative clause which begins at the Bucolic diaeresis and which is followed by the verb at the beginning of the next line that there is an applicable model for the structure of this simile; for example:

> θηρὸς ἀκούσαντες κρατερόφρονος, ὅς τε καθ' ὕλην
> ἔρχηται δι' ὄρεσφι·
>
> (10.184-5)

> ὅσσον δὲ τροχοῦ ἵππος ἀφίσταται, ὅς ῥα ἄνακτα
> ἕλκῃσιν πεδίοιο . . .
>
> (23.517-8)

Line 8.307, however, does not begin with a verb but is continued by a participle, which is also a traditional way of adding a line. Considering the method of composition, grammatical consistency cannot always be foremost in the poet's mind, and in fact, he does very well to be as grammatically correct as he is. The technique of building with small units—new clauses, participles, appositional adjectives and nouns, and relative clauses—helps the poet to move in such small units that there is limited opportunity to forget vital elements. Yet in this simile the poet began with one type of clause which was a customary way of ending a line and then continued with another type of clause which was equally familiar at the beginning of a line. He simply was thinking in the narrow terms of the individual members of his simile and not in terms of the grammar or even the sense of the passage.[56] In a written style this simile could not be punctuated, though in an oral style it is perfectly understandable.[57]

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[55] Cf. Leaf on 8.306.

[56] Notopoulos *op. cit.* (supra, n. 40), p. 15: "... the oral poet is both physically and mentally bound to the moment, the immediate verse, and his intimate relation with the audience... neither the poet nor his audience can divert their attention for any period of time to the whole; they cannot pause to analyze, compare, and relate parts to the whole; the whole only exists as an *arrière pensée* which both the poet and his audience share as a context for the immediate tectonic plasticity of the episode."

[57] F. M. Combellack, "Milman Parry and Homeric Artistry." *Comparative Literature* XI (1959), pp. 193-208; on p. 208 he is discussing the critical limitations on the interpreter of oral verse: "For all that any critic of Homer can now show, the occasional highly appropriate word may, like the occasional highly inappropriate one, be purely coincidental—part of the law of averages, if you like, in the use of the formulary style."

This simile is no exception since long similes with no verb are also found at 16.406 and Od. 11.413.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a tighter structure in many of the similes of the *Odyssey* than in those of the *Iliad* where often the verb will be two lines away from its subject. A recent study has noted that the most integrated set of lines in a simile occurs at Od. 4.335 (which is repeated at Od. 17.126).[58] Though, to be sure, there are examples of these longer and more complex units in the *Iliad*, such similes are more common in the *Odyssey*. There is no implication, however, that the *Odyssey* represents a written style while the *Iliad* is the product of an earlier stage when poetry was sung. Both were composed orally, but the composition of the *Odyssey* is to this extent more subtle and sophisticated, though needless to say, there are also similes which are strictly additive, uncomplicated, and unsubordinated in the *Odyssey*.

Corroboration of the general additive quality of extending lines can be found in the recent study by C. J. Ruijgh, *Autour de "te Épique"* in which he identifies a usage of the particle τε which implies a closer connection between two clauses than coordination. He calls this function "disgressif-permanent". The use of τε (relative, temporal, or coordinate) signifies that the clause is not essential to the understanding of the independent statement and is thus digressive. At the same time, the subordinate clause generally provides information which is always true of the independent statement and thus expresses a connection which can be regarded as permanent. The subordinate clause then provides information which does not have to be said, and it can thus be regarded as digressive rather than essential to the immediate context.[59]

III. Conclusion: The Language of the Similes

As one critic of Homer phrased his comments on the poem:

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken . . .

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58 Hogan *op. cit.* (supra, n. 37), p. 156.
59 Ruijgh (see above, note 43).

Against such a statement the remarks made in this chapter may sound like literary slander.

Homer repeated whole similes, continually borrowed phrases from here and there to make obvious pastiches, was a master at the creation of the run-on sentence, and often broke the basic rules of grammar. Yet the poet who composed in this way has been regarded by the most demanding grammarians and scrupulously literal critics as the father of Western letters and the model of the epic. The evidence presented in this chapter is clear indication that Homer, as great a poet as he was, composed even the smallest and most self-contained images in terms of half-lines, whole lines, and blocks of lines. Such a technique inevitably leads to a style which is far different from a later written style. And therefore what would be regarded as clumsy and awkward in a written epic must often be excused as a mark of oral composition.[60]

Many critics have been willing to admit that the narrative is the product of oral composition but doubt the oral composition of the similes. Lingering suspicions have existed that such short and yet effective images must be the spontaneous creation of an individual poet and must have reflected the world around him, even though the narrative was built from type scenes and formulaic phrases inherited from a long line of oral singers. The evidence cited in this study shows that similes seem to have had an ancestry which is also based in the oral tradition. Similes were taken from the poet's memory harking back to the inherited diction of the oral tradition rather than created from the poet's eye glancing on a memorable landscape. If then the similes were the products of an oral singer and were composed in terms of the traditional units—large and small— which have been illustrated, there is solid support in the language and structure of Homeric verse for the statements concerning the placement, subject matter and extension which have been previously made.

[60] The additive approach to composition is especially significant when one must contend with a book like D. J. N. Lee's *The Similes of the Iliad and the Odyssey Compared*. Much of his argument is derived from a subjective judgment on those lines which are organically related to their passages and those which are obvious additions. If it can be agreed that the oral style of the Homeric poems encourages an additive method of composition with less than complete care for matching details, then there is little proof of lateness or spuriousness in calling attention to lines which seem to a reader of the twentieth century to be added or irrelevant.

It has been demonstrated that the poet reached certain junctures in the narrative where he customarily thought of singing a simile.[61] Examination of the language of the similes suggests that the simile is an independent entity entering the narrative either at the beginning of the line or else beginning at one of the traditional caesurae of the line. Such positioning facilitates the insertion of the standard metrical configurations of the simile unit at several points in each line; thus the poet has no need to create each simile individually for its place. In addition, since each simile was so independent of the narrative, the poet did not need to prepare for the simile. When he came to the crucial juncture, he was only required to decide whether he would continue with a simile or with one of the other alternatives suggested by the tradition. There would be little point in examining the clause directly before the simile for signs of an impending simile because the lines preceding this juncture permitted a choice which was quite free among two or three alternatives. Probably an oral poet himself could not have told his audience whether he would sing a simile until he was at the crucial spot, an indication of how strongly independent the simile was in conception, in practice, and in form from the narrative. Finally, the additive structure of each simile shows that it was not of major significance to the poet whether he sang a long or short simile to satisfy the simile suggestion given to him by the tradition. Some similes are so short that a moment's inattentiveness from the audience would remove them and their effect from the poem. It may even be that an oral poet would choose the alternative of the simile in such cases to finish out his line smoothly; a short simile will usually fill out a colon without complicating the story. The choice was to sing a simile or not; in the former case, the length of the extension could be determined as the poet worked with the subject, felt the needs of the story, and kept a watchful eye on the tolerance of his audience. At the beginning of any one line the poet was called upon to answer only one question: was there to be a simile or not? Subject and extension could all be settled independently of that question.

Concerning the subject matter of the similes the poet seems most often to have thought in terms of a simple subject with no real notion of precise balance between simile and narrative.[62] The choice

[61] See supra, Chapter 2.
[62] See supra, Chapter 3.

of the basic subject was limited to a traditional list of formulaic or, at least, independent metrical units which the poet willingly embraced in order to turn his thoughts to other matters. The short similes, which stand by themselves or may be extended into longer similes, demonstrate the poet's manner of choosing the basic subject first and then considering its extension. A certain artificial quality or even serious incongruity can only be expected when the poet took the subject suggested by a traditional scene each time even though the details of each particular story may have changed. Incongruities are especially noticeable when the poet chose the same simile twice—as in the simile of the hungering lion—even though the story, the motivation, and the characters are quite different. And yet in the majority of cases similes sit well enough in their location and such a judgment is probably the limit of the poet's concern, since he wants his story to move forward easily with no exceptionally jarring passages. Perfection in comparisons in the sense one finds this quality in the similes of Vergil is nearly impossible for the oral poet. When he submits to the dictates of the tradition and its formulaic language, he has conceded this point. His aim when singing within the tradition is to diminish incongruity and roughness while admitting that neither can be totally abolished.

Finally, it has been shown that the poet extended each simile by looking more to the tone of the whole passage than to the details of the narrative which he was trying to complement.[63] Often when the simile goes further than the narrative or falls short or simply is irrelevant, the poet is not idly wandering, he is trying to deepen the effectiveness of the whole scene by lending a tone or atmosphere which will complement the narrative scene. Some similes were recalled by the poet from his experience and had, therefore, been tested in their effect, while undoubtedly some similes were improvised as the poet sang. The additive structure of each simile would allow an oral poet to create freely as he sang, all the while watching his audience to see when the effect had been achieved; thus he would never have committed himself to a long, involved simile without expressly willing it. The paratactic structure of the simile allowed the poet to concentrate fully on the tone of the simile without distracting himself for the complexities of subordination and also

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[63] See supra, Chapter 4.

permitted him to stop the development of an idea which did not seem to be effective and turn easily to another approach.

None of these statements seems particularly new when applied to the narrative. My aim has been to point out features of traditional oral diction which are uniform throughout the similes and which may even explain some of the odd features of grammar and structure in several similes. Considering the press of time, the compulsion of a binding form like the hexameter, and the insatiate demands of an audience, it is almost impossible to think of a bard composing both simile and narrative in any other way. The advantage of conforming to the traditional oral method of composition is that it permits impromptu singing in units which are unsubordinated one to the other and which are not dominated by any organic, unifying conception with requirements of rigid parallels and precise exclusions. And yet in his adherence to the oral diction there is a greater freedom for the development of two concerns which are quite vital to Homer: the effective presentation of the individual scene—both fact and feeling, and the communication to other men of the theme of the larger story. The artistry and the significance which men of various ages have found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are ample justification for a creative poet's submission to the diction of traditional epic. The prison unto which Homer doomed himself no prison was. And it is tempting to speculate about an epic poet who might have decided to escape the oral diction by creating anew a tale for an audience attuned to traditional songs. This is a man who very probably would feel "the weight of too much liberty."

CHAPTER SIX

THE HOMERIC SIMILE AND THE ORAL TRADITION

I. The Relationship between Art and Poetry

One of the continuing complaints of Homerists is the lack of contemporary evidence independent of the Homeric poems on which to test their conclusions. Comparative study of the epic in later Greek manifestations, in Roman transformations, and in the oral verse of other literatures is an ultimate expedient embraced with no real joy. There is no adequate substitute for the enforced breadth of view provided by independent contemporary evidence, especially when one's eyes are directed narrowly at a single work of art. Conclusions about Homeric artistry reached solely on the basis of the Homeric text represent the best efforts of critics and undoubtedly approach true descriptions of the poet and his poem though such conclusions lack the critical sharpness and certitude possible in studying another age, closer in time, whose literary and social conventions are well known and whose history and thought patterns are familiar.

In spite of this innate weakness in Homeric studies, there is one possibility for independent testimony which has, at times, been invoked: the Homeric audience. Although there is no way in which any single individual of that group can be questioned concerning his response to the poems, there remains the possibility of probing the attitudes of the group by examining other creative works produced in the period from late Mycenaean times to the early Archaic age. Visual art works—pottery, stelae, sarcophagi—are preserved from this long period in adequate quantity to permit at least superficial examination of the taste of the people and the aims of their artists.

Such an inquiry is intended to conclude and summarize the detailed analysis of the Homeric simile. While conclusions to long studies are often presented with great pride and conviction, this brief study of the relationship between the similes and art, is presented with only marginal confidence. These interpretations of individual art works carry little weight of their own since they are, in the real sense of the words, derived and, therefore, highly depen-

dent observations. In the course of gathering information on the similes, I have noted that there are certain customary comparisons in the similes which have their analogues in the work of visual and plastic artists. It is possible, and perhaps no more than possible, that there is a similar intent on the part of the poet, who sang the simile, and on the part of the painter or sculptor, who created the art work.

There have been numerous attempts to relate the art of visual artists to the Homeric poems. Connections have been found at at least four different levels:

1. Close representations of specific objects or events
2. Illustrations of general practices and customs
3. Reflections of cultural traditions
4. Parallels of artistic technique and style.

On the first level are discoveries of an almost direct relationship between a physical object and an object described in the poems.[1] The parallel between the so-called Nestor's cup and the description of the much larger and more ornate vessel in *Iliad* 11 is close, but not precise.[2] The explanation of the boar's tusks found in Mycenaean tombs is probably the most helpful direct parallel between archaeology and the Homeric poems. Parallels to individual scenes may be similarly sought, and R. Hampe has discovered a picture of a shipwreck which seems to be based on the *Odyssey*.[3] The drawing of such parallels does not involve the creative power of the poet nor the poetic use of the object, but simply indicates the existence of an object or event which is similar to that in the text.

On the second level there are studies of practices and customs known from painted scenes and interpretations of remains which parallel passages in the Homeric poems. For example, there is a great difference in battle tactics between the man who carries one long thrusting spear and the warrior who carries two smaller

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[1] Among recent works, H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London 1950) and the chapters on material culture by A. J. B. Wace, H. P. Wace, and F. H. Stubbings in A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings, *A Companion to Homer* (London 1962).

[2] See A. Furumark, "Nestor's Cup and the Mycenaean Dove Goblet", *Eranos* 44 (1946), pp. 41-53 for a discussion of the lack of connection between the cup in the poem and the cup from the Shaft Grave.

[3] Hampe, p. 26 ff. Cf. K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art* (Copenhagen 1967); he cites scenes taken from the *Iliad* in dating the spreading awareness of the *Iliad* story.

throwing spears. This is not simply a question of how many spears the man picked up; it is a comment on the type of fighting this warrior expected, the relative age or newness of this method of warfare, and the armor which would be complementary to such a conception of battle.[4] Information on such subjects comes largely from physical remains and art works of various periods. When the text stresses that the shield of Ajax is like a tower, this is sufficient evidence for one critic to maintain:

> Though in two of his more spectacular appearances (as champion against Hector and as the protector of Teukros) we shall find Aias as a wielder of the round shield, behind this figure we can discern another, older and more shadowy, who is still so dominated by the ancient tradition that alone of the first-class heroes he never wears a corslet. In Homer's hands indeed he becomes a creature of flesh and blood, as solid a creation as any of the secondary characters; but his footing in heroic society is precarious . . . The great Aias seems to be some legendary figure of the remote past, the type of the perfect warrior as he was in the days when the body-shield held sway.[5]

In these first two types of inquiry the parallels are of interest mainly to later critics; they are of slight importance to the oral poet and of even less concern to his audience. If the Homeric audience recollected the object or a similar object as they were listening to the singer, they would probably have nodded in silent recognition but would not have let this recollection distract them from the course of the story. The experience of listening to oral verse would have approximated graduate study if the audience had been expected to interrupt their concentration on the story in order to ponder the mixture of ages which seems to have formed the conglomerate figure of Ajax.[6] The concern in these studies is primarily archaeolo-

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[4] See G. S. Kirk, "Objective Dating Criteria in Homer," in *Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge 1964), pp. 174-190 for cautionary advice on dating various objects in Homer.

[5] Lorimer *op. cit.* (supra, n. 1), pp. 181-2.

[6] J. A. Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," *TAPhA* 80 (1949), pp. 1-23 discusses the necessary concentration of the poet and his audience on the development of the immediate story: "neither the poet nor his audience can divert their attention for any period of time to the whole; they cannot pause to analyze, compare, and relate parts to the whole" (15).

gical, and the points made have more relevance to the history and to the art of early Greece than they do to the composition or the artistry of the poems.

The third type of connection made between visual and verbal art concerns the similes more directly. There are critics who have related the style of description in the similes to the painting style of either Minoan-Mycenaean art or to the painters of the late Geometric period. F. Winter finds that Homer and Mycenaean artists clearly observed the individual characteristics of nature, while early Archaic art shows a marked tendency to use simile subjects as decoration with little concern for the effectiveness of the individual scene. In the later period there is a tendency toward the use of repeated type scenes as opposed to the more vigorous Mycenaean treatment of individual scenes. each of which is told for its own sake.[7] Opposed to him is W. Schadewaldt who finds the spirit of the Homeric simile utterly divorced from Minoan-Mycenaean art. Cretan art is unrealistic in that the characters are more decorative in their nature than narrative; each character in a Cretan painting fills his space on the wall without really entering into the scene which is being portrayed. In his similes Homer, on the other hand, is interested in the essence of the object which is being portrayed. He combines the surface appearance with the essence to produce a small narrative scene in which characters play their appropriate roles.[8] Schadewaldt's conclusions are carried further by R. Hampe, who feels that the art of the Geometric period provides the closest parallel in aims and techniques to the similes. These scholars attempt to define the aesthetic principles which control the representation of the same scene in words and in paint or in inlay.

This third type of study differs from the previous two examples because there is some attempt to see the attitude of the poet toward his material from nature. Underlying these studies is the belief that the proper interpretation of the artist's perception and presentation of nature will lead to further knowledge about the poet or poets of the epic poems. Once again, however, there is little interest in the

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[7] F. Winter, "Parallelerscheinungen in der griechischen Dichtkunst und bildenden Kunst," in Gercke-Norden, *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft* (Leipzig and Berlin 1910) II, p. 161 ff.

[8] W. Schadewaldt, "Die Homerische Gleichniswelt und die Kretisch-Mykenische Kunst," in *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (4th ed.; Stuttgart 1965), pp. 130-154.

audience. If there is a consideration of tradition, it is the tradition which the poet carried within himself and upon which he drew in forming the exact words of his simile scenes.

Finally, there are a few attempts at locating the connection between visual art and poetry in the shared thoughts of poet, painter, and audience. C. H. Whitman has recently illustrated the parallel between the composition of the Homeric poems and the rhythmical, balanced placement of similar designs on Geometric vases. He has analysed the principles of composition which appear in art objects of the period when Homer composed, and he has found these same principles operative in the structure of the Homeric poems. The common concern of both visual and literary artists is the approval of those who view the painting and of those who hear the epic. Consequently, the connection between these two types of art lies where, in the final analysis, it inevitably must: in the minds of the artists and of the audience for which they were composing. This type of study explains little about the actual visible objects or their history; yet with the aid of these objects the critic hopes to define the structure of the poem, to establish the poet's intent in creating his epic, and to perceive, even vaguely, the audience's reactions in hearing the poem. Scholars of later generations can perceptively analyze Homeric composition, but they can never come close enough to the instinctive and immediate understanding possessed by a contemporary audience to participate in the full pleasure of the story well told. Similarly it is possible to analyze intellectually the principles which underlie the creation of the Geometric amphora, but one would have to be born surrounded by the traditions and spirit of ancient Greece to recapture the instantaneous and unconscious feelings stirred by the achievement of excellence in terms of the living, artistic canon. The comparison of the two media, however, allows a modern critic to approach one step closer to an understanding of the contemporary audience.[9]

In this listing of four varied approaches to art through verse and verse through art, the main concern of each type of criticism stands

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[9] Cf. Snell, p. 7 where he compares the way a modern child and an early Greek artist draw a man. He then draws a conclusion about the early Greeks by comparing their art and their speech: "Thus the early Greeks did not, either in their language or in the visual arts, grasp the body as a unit." See also J. L. Myres, "The Last Book of the *Iliad*," JHS 52 (1932), pp. 264-296 and "Homeric Art," *BSA* 45 (1950), pp. 229-260, and Webster, pp. 187-207 259-265.

out clearly. Each of these approaches, in the order listed, becomes increasingly more significant for the study of oral poetry as each considers people who are more directly involved in the creation and presentation of the poem. The first type of study, which points out parallels to physical objects, is of interest to the archaeologist and the historian, who are not particularly pertinent when one's aim is literary. The second and third types of investigation, which identify customs and cultural traditions similar to physical remains, concentrate on the background of the poet and the visual artist. Yet it is only in research which seeks artistic principles common to the age that the most important contributors to the oral style are considered in the fulness to which they are so amply entitled: the Homeric audience. The oral poet may have continually renewed the tradition, but it was his audience which pronounced such renewal successful or misguided, and which controlled by its acceptance the rate of change and the amount of freedom which the oral poet could enjoy. There is an insufficiently understood intermingling of two strong forces when one speaks of the oral tradition: poet *and* audience, and only the last type of study takes into account the relationship between poet and audience which truly determines the direction of the tradition. Such inquiry is necessarily indefinite in its results and difficult because of the intricacy of interpretation, since any depth in understanding may, in fact, be ultimately impossible once the oral poets, their audiences, and their milieu have passed from the earth. And yet only in the minds of both poet and audience can the connection between words and objects be adequately explored.[10]

These are words of almost inevitable frustration. There are few ways to learn the thoughts and the desires of the Homeric audience except through mute physical remains. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* constitute an overwhelming percentage of the extant words and thought of this early period, and there is little independent testimony. Perhaps in following the method used by C. H. Whitman it will be possible to see some of the traditional features of the simile in visual art, because such a comparison of poetry and art provides a technique for more closely defining the expectations of the audience

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[10] Homerists desperately need the type of study which has been done by D. Whitelock, *The Audience of Beowulf* (Oxford 1951); evidence, however, of the kind that was available for her study which has long since perished for the years when Homer composed.

for whom both painter and poet were creating. If the physical remains of a society can cast light upon the words of a poet, then it should also be true that the poets of the oral tradition can provide words for the voiceless monuments of painters and sculptors. Further, when various craftsmen from scattered locations and different periods seem to be working on the same principles, then there is an opportunity to focus from several directions on the aesthetic principles of the times, which is to say, the aesthetic principles of the people. Such an approach will not allow a critic to distinguish subtle changes of attitude and shifts of view, but it will illustrate in general terms the ways of thinking which produced the characteristic features of the epics and the distinctive qualities of the visual art.

It has been demonstrated previously that there were certain narrative contexts which suggested a very limited number of subjects for similes to the poet.[11] The chart on page 86 lists all such contexts; two of these are:

Lion (Boar) in contexts of a fighting warrior
Hunting scenes in contexts of pursuit and attack.

There are many other narrative contexts listed, but the two scenes of fighting warrior(s) and pursuit and attack are the ones most commonly represented in visual art. The chart was then reversed to indicate the connections between simile and narrative as they existed in the minds of the Homeric poet and his audience:

Contexts of a fighting warrior will often contain a simile of a lion (boar)
Contexts of pursuit and attack will often contain a simile of a hunting scene.

This connection of lion with fighting warrior was not prescribed in a handbook for oral poets, nor was it a rigid rule which every oral poet was compelled to follow at the risk of being drummed out of his profession. The compulsion to employ the lion simile arose from the past success of this subject in conveying the mood and in parallelling the situation of most basic appearances of the fighting warrior. Such a connection would not have remained in the traditional diction as firmly as it did unless it had been highly useful in a

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[11] See supra, Chapter 3.

variety of situations. The frequency of these two simile subjects in customary scenes is ample indication of the poet's dependence on such a tradition. But it is also evidence that the pairing of lions and boars with a fighting warrior was equally familiar to the Homeric audience. The early Greeks, reared on the oral tradition for generations, would feel nothing strange or wondrous in the words: "He fought like a lion . . ." or "He chased him just as a dog chases a deer . . ." In further corroboration of this familiarity there is evidence that the painters of various periods were also aware of this traditional connection and drew on it in creating their works.

In order to illustrate the premise that artists chose subject matter in the same way as oral poets, a special type of art work is required. Either there must be an obvious type of iconography which allows the significance of the simile-like scene to be grasped easily, or else the art object must be composed of two or more distinct panels, one of which must illustrate a narrative scene from the world of men while the other presents a scene containing creatures from the world of simile (in this case lions, boars, hunters, and their prey). The simile scene should, then, parallel the action in the narrative panel. Such an arrangement is rare in Greek art since more often Greek artists attempted to cover the available surface with one unified composition rather than split the field and, thus, be forced to create a unity from the two pictures.[12] There are, however, several examples of art objects which do reveal a desire to unify subjects of various picture panels and which also reveal a feeling for the same connections which can be observed in matching simile subject and narrative context.[13] Three basic styles offer evidence:

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[12] This is a broad statement made for presenting clearly the type of art work required in this study. I must acknowledge that there are important exceptions in Rhodian ware, Proto-Corinthian, Corinthian, and Geometric pottery.

[13] Hampe, pp. 33-4 offers an example of this kind of connection in commenting on the decoration of a vase: "Sowohl auf der Wagenfahrt im Hauptfries als auch auf der Fuchshatz darunter, bilden die Füllmotive, so belanglos sie als solche erscheinen, ein wesentliches Element der Bildwirkung. Sie helfen, die Vorstellung von Geschwindigkeit, Bewegung und Erregung zu steigern, erzeugen mit den Figuren zusammen einen unauflöslichen Gesamteindruck. Wir konnten verwandte Symptome auch bei den homerischen Gleichnissen feststellen. Es lieft über solchen Bildern das, was man für die Gleichnisse mit "Stimmung" oder "Stimmungsgehalt" auszudrücken suchte, womit etwas Richtiges gekennzeichnet war, wenn man dabei nicht an Stimmung im romantischen Sinne denkt."

1. Mycenaean Art and Its Precursors
2. Proto-Attic Pottery
3. Clazomenian Sarcophagi

1. *Myceanean Art and its Precursors*

The evidence from Mycenaean and earlier art bearing directly on the connection between simile and narrative is understandably slight given the great distance in time from the composition of the Homeric poems and the inevitable changes in the oral tradition. The most pertinent art objects which have a symbolic meaning are the various figures of lions, but statements on such objects run the risk of going beyond the evidence. There are, of course, inlayed figures of lions and hunters on dagger blades;[14] these could represent the might of the warrior who wields the weapon, though such an interpretation is not necessarily certain. More clearly metaphorical is the Lion Gate of Mycenae which is so rich in symbolic meaning. It is evident to any visitor to the magnificent site that this sculpture is intended to say much about the power and prestige of the Mycenaean king.[15] Though it would be excessive to try to give a precise meaning to each feature of the sculptural composition, the two heraldic lions most probably represent the warrior aspect of the king of Mycenae. Such a comparison as 11.172 ff. comes easily to mind:

> some were being driven through the middle of the plain like cattle which a lion has scattered coming in the darkness of the night, and to one alone appears sheer death—first seizing her neck he breaks it and then laps up the blood and all the entrails, so did mighty Agamemnon, son of Atreus follow after them . . . (11.172-77)

In support of this interpretation A. W. Persson has listed parallels from Egyptian and Near Eastern art which may show the origin of the comparison of ruler and victorious warrior to a lion. His citations reach back as far as the 18th Dynasty (1580 B.C.). For example, the Pharaoh Thotmes II is presented on a scarabaeus as a lion standing over a fallen enemy with the inscription: "The lion, The conqueror, a wildly glaring lion, when he sees the enemy who crosses his path."

[14] Represented in Marinatos and Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae* (London 1960), plates XXXV-XXXVII.

[15] Cf. G. E. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton 1966), pp. 173-76.

The Pharoah besieges a city: "like a lion who lies in wait." Persson also cites the Lion Gate at Boghazköi, which may, however, have an apotropaic function, and the comparisons to lions from *Genesis* 49.9 and *Deuteronomy* 33.22.[16]

Similar in intent is the scene on a stele found by Schliemann and numbered 1427 in the inventory of the National Museum at Athens.[17] The sculpture is badly damaged, but certain features can be clearly identified. In the picture panel there are two separate scenes which seem to be unrelated. The bottom of the composition shows a lion chasing a deer. Above these two animal figures is a single man driving a chariot. He holds the reins in his left hand and a short object, perhaps a whip, in his right. He seems decidedly unarmed. The chariot is being driven over an odd-shaped mound which has been interpreted in various ways; it might be an opposing warrior now fallen under his figure-of-eight shield or a representation of a rocky landscape. The scene of a warrior crushing his enemies would be fitting decoration for a grave marker; G. Mylonas, however, feels that the driver—who is not a warrior since he is unarmed—is engaged in a chariot race which is a part of the funeral games for the dead nobleman.[18] Neither interpretation, however, explains the animals below. If, indeed, there is a unity to the picture, then it seems that the sculptor was using the same type of parallel which is developed in the similes:[19] the charioteer is like the lion who chases a weaker animal, in this case, a deer:

> Just as a lion easily tears apart the gentle young of a fleet deer snatching them in his strong teeth when he has entered their lair and taken their tender life from them—and the mother even if she happens to be close by cannot aid them because a terrible trembling strikes her and swiftly she runs through the thick brush and the forest sweating in her panic before the charge of the mighty beast, so also was no one of the Trojans able to keep death away from the two but they fled before the Greeks.
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> (11.113-21)

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16 A. W. Persson, "Legende und Mythos in ihrem Verhältnis zu Bild und Gleichnis im vorgeschichtlichen Griechenland," *DRAGMA* (Lund 1939), p. 379 ff.

17 Pictured in Marinatos-Hirmer *op. cit.* (supra, n. 14), Figure 146.

18 G. E. Mylonas, "The Figured Mycenaean Stelai," *AJA* 55 (1951), pp. 134-147.

19 See note on page 176.

This stele is so poorly preserved that there is little hope of identifying convincingly the strange object beneath the horse. If it is not the figure of a slain opponent, perhaps it is landscape and the picture merely represents the confident chieftain driving his chariot through his domain. This is an apt scene for a tombstone, and the compliment would be reinforced by the commentary provided in the parallel scene of the lion chasing the deer.

In all these examples from Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Mycenaean art, the lion is joined with the warrior or the nobleman, an analogy which is well established in art and in literature. The persistence of this same comparison with its luxuriant development in the poetry of Homer is probably rooted in the earlier connection which would have entered the Greek oral tradition far before the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were composed in their present forms.

A similar kind of pairing might be traced in the conjunction of birds with divinities. It has already been pointed out that in two cases it is difficult to distinguish the simile of a bird describing a divinity from a transformation.[20] At Od. 3.372 Athena leaves Telemachus, Nestor, and the assembled citizens of Pylos:

> Thus the gleaming-eyed Athena spoke and went away in the likeness of a sea-eagle. Wonder seized all the Achaeans, and the old man was amazed when he saw it.

There is similar ambiguity at Od. 1.320. In the Homeric poems there are thirteen occasions upon which a god or goddess is compared to a bird.

M. Nilsson comments on the representations of birds in conjunction with divinities and shrine models in Minoan art and also on related objects found at Mycenae. Birds appear on sarcophagi with religious scenes, on religious statues, and on temple or shrine models.[21] There is a strong Minoan influence in such works, especially since they do not occur with any frequency after the LH I period. G. Mylonas is dubious of the significance to the Mycenaeans of birds on top of human figures or alighting on shrines, but he is willing to consider the acceptance of this Minoan custom by the Mycenaeans:

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[19] Webster, p. 224. Cf. A. W. Persson, *New Tombs at Dendra Near Midea* (Lund 1942), p. 189.

[20] See supra, p. 77.

[21] M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (3rd ed.; Munich 1967), I, pp. 290-92 and plates 10 and 11. See also Webster, p. 224.

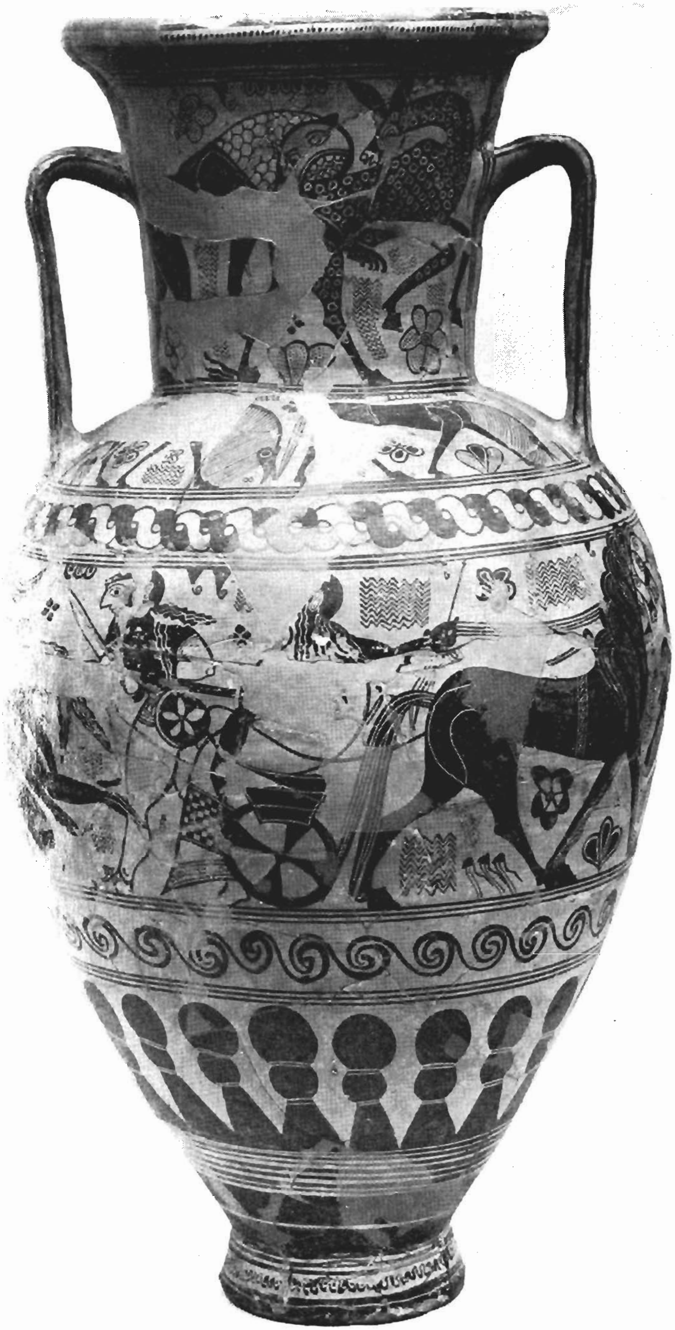

PLATE 1
Neck Amphora (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, 1911)

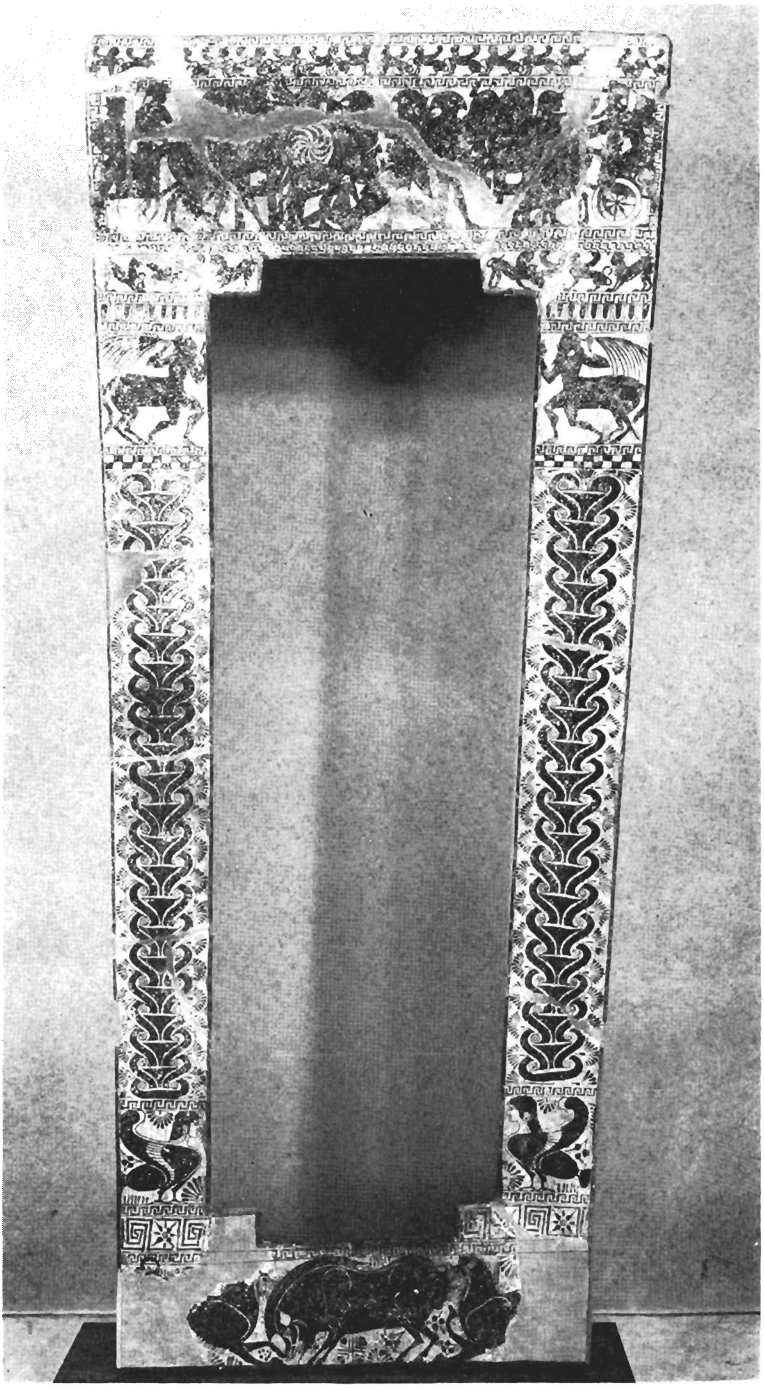

PLATE 2

Painted Sarcophagus Rim (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1921)

> . . . it is not clear whether or not they adopted the device of the bird symbolizing the epiphany of a goddess. After LH I the only example of the divine epiphany is to be found on the sealing from the Rhyton Well of Mycenae; but even that example, dating from LH II times, could be considered an importation. However, the legends and the association of birds with Olympian deities, such as Athena, may indicate the adoption of the Minoan concept of divine epiphany by the Mycenaeans.[22]

These two examples of lion-warrior and bird-divinity connections which appeared in the art and literature of the Near East, Egypt, Crete and Mycenaean Greece may show the origins of the later expanded similes. If this is true, then the folk tradition which united certain similes with limited contexts is very ancient and, perhaps, ultimately pre-Greek.

2. *Proto-Attic Pottery*

The second area of early Greek art offering two major picture panels is proto-Attic pottery of which perhaps the clearest example is the Nessos Vase in the Metropolitan Museum (Plate 1). This amphora has a very tall neck with a picture frieze on it and also one on the body of the vase. There are decorations on the lip of the vase, on the handles, at the shoulders and several bands below the main panel, but the two principal surfaces for decoration are the body and the neck. The main panel shows Heracles fighting Nessos; the panel on the neck contains a panther or lion attacking a deer. Though panthers are not a common topic in the similes, a panther does appear in a context where it is equated to a lion or a boar (17.20 f.), and the one extended simile of the panther puts him in the type of hunting scene which most often would have contained a lion or a boar:

> Just as a panther comes out of a deep thicket to face a hunter and does not fear nor flee when she hears the barking of the dogs —even if a man wounds her or strikes her first, still pierced with the spear she does not cease from her fury until she has attacked him or is killed . . .
>
> (21.573-78)

[22] Mylonas *op. cit.* (supra, n. 15), p. 176.

If the artist of the Nessos Vase were trying to create a unit in at least these two panels, then he is probably drawing upon his viewers' knowledge of the oral tradition by presenting Heracles subduing Nessos as similar to the wild animal who subdues the deer.

A second example is a vase from Denmark (*CVA* Danemark 2, Pl. 73, 4a and b). There are three major panels on this vase; on the body there is a scene of warfare on ship and on shore with several killings, while immediately above this scene there is a frieze of four dogs chasing a highly nervous rabbit. There is just such a simile at 10.360:

> as when two sharp-toothed dogs, skilled in hunting, chase ceaselessly after a young deer or hare through the woods, and he runs crying before them . . .
>
> (10.360-62)

The panel on the neck of the vase represents a man with a sword holding two horses; his connection to the scenes on the body is problematical. He could be the squire holding the horses while his warrior-master is repulsing invaders from the sea; but he could fill so many other roles that satisfactory interpretation is difficult. More important is the immediate juxtaposition of the battle scene and the simile scene.

One further example comes from Berlin (*CVA*, Deutschland 2, Pl. 43 and 44). There are four major decorative friezes on this vase: on the neck, on the shoulder, and two on the body. The neck band shows individual combat; the shoulder, one warrior fighting from a horse and one from a chariot; the first panel on the body shows several scenes of individual combat; the second band presents six lions. This bottom frieze states in a comparative pictorial way the same spirit as the three upper decorative bands, a connection that would be especially apparent to viewers raised on the oral tradition.

Several other examples can be listed:

1. *CVA*, National Museum Athens 2, Pl. 1 (Gréce): a frieze at the shoulder of the vase with two lions and three stags while the major frieze shows a warrior in a chariot next to a woman and child. Beneath this band there is a procession of six bulls. The connection between the warrior and the lions tracking the stags is amply paralleled from the similes; the bull panel may reflect the prominence of the warrior in the same way that the simile at 2.480 adds

stature to Agamemnon; but then this subject appears in so many different contexts in the Homeric poems that it is doubtful that a tradition had been developed which would give added significance to the mere representation of a bull. More revealing is the juxtaposition of the warrior and the lion.

2. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (#1935.18): an early Orientalizing vase with four bands: 1. Chariots, 2. Hounds pursuing a rabbit, 3. Chariots, 4. Hounds pursuing a fox.

3. British Museum (#1927-4-11-1): a tall amphora with two panels representing warriors with spears and swords. A frieze between the two picture panels contain five dogs chasing one rabbit.

4. Louvre (CA 3468) Attic Sub-geometric: there are five picture panels: 1. (top of vase) single men in two horse chariot; 2. (bottom of neck) standing armed men, equipped with upright spears; 3. (body) men in two-horse chariots and men with shields and spears; 4. (immediately beneath body panel) lions or wolves walking in file; 5. (immediately beneath #4) running horses or dogs. At the very least the two friezes of armed warriors juxtaposed with the lions or wolves make a unified statement; perhaps the running animal contributes its share, especially if these animals are hunting dogs.

3. *Clazomenian Sarcophagi*

The third art form which may show significant relation to the oral tradition as revealed in the choice of simile subjects is the more or less standard form of the Clazomenian sarcophagus cover; examples are all dated approximately to the 6th century.[23] The form is demonstrated clearly by an example in the Metropolitan Museum (Plate 2). The decorated surface consists of a rectangular frame tapering toward the bottom. The rectangular area left vacant in the center was at times covered by a gabel-shaped roof.[24] At the four corners of this opening there is a protruding small rectangular inset which is treated as part of the surface to be decorated. The long sides of this sarcophagus are painted with an interlocked spiral and palmette motif. At the top and bottom of these side pieces there are square spaces set aside for separate picture panels. Beneath the bottom squares and above the top squares there is a

[23] R. M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery* (London 1960), pp. 138-9.
[24] E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen* (Munich 1923), I, p. 166.

narrow band with geometric or figured decoration. Across the top and the bottom of the cover there are unbroken picture panels running the full width of the sarcophagus. Though within this basic pattern there are variations, the standard form of the Clazomenian sarcophagus is preserved remarkably well in most of the remaining examples.

Particularly pertinent to the intent of the artist is the conscious striving for symmetry throughout the composition with the notable exception of the large picture panels at the top and the bottom. On the sarcophagus from the Metropolitan Museum the decorative elements on the side pieces are almost perfectly symmetrical. At the top there are balancing panels containing two heraldic sphinxes facing one another surrounded by two lions. Although the painting has been severely damaged, the attempt at symmetry is evident in such small details as the curl of the tails on the outer two sphinxes. The sphinx on the far right has a neatly curling tail which stands out in sharp profile against the plain background. The sphinx on the far left carries its tail a little more low slung although in the same neat curl. The problem is one of spacing because the composition on the right is more crowded toward the inside of the sarcophagus while that on the left is more compressed toward the outer edge. However there is no correction made for the differences in spacing. If one sphinx had a handsome tail in an s-curve, then his counterpart must have the same, the desire for symmetry taking precedence over clarity of composition. The same point could be made in reference to the s-curve tails of the two innermost sphinxes, since this area of the picture seems clear on the left but confused on the right.

Continuing down the side panels there are facing centaurs with palm branches. There is a break with the idea of symmetry in this small composition; the palm branches on the left are exhaustively decorated with leaves, while those on the right are denuded. Beneath the centaur is a column of interlocked double spirals with palmettes to either side. There are more spirals on the left than on the right, but this is not evident to the casual observer and the effect is one of symmetry. Then follow two facing sirens; identical decorative elements fill the surrounding space in the square. Beneath the birds is a series of small squares each filled with an abstract design. These are not in perfect symmetry although there are two basic designs which are alternated. Such a listing of the decorative elements reveals the depth of interest in balance and

symmetry which is characteristic of the design of most Clazomenian sarcophagi.

The only two panels which are not symmetrical are the large top and bottom panels. Such panels offer another possibility for illustrating graphically the same connections which exist in the Homeric simile. In the example from the Metropolitan Museum there is a battle scene in the top panel. Because the painting is so damaged it is difficult to ascertain the details, but there is a partial symmetry in the composition. The picture is flanked by two chariots each with two riders; there are two round shields, one dark and one light which balance each other toward the middle of the picture. But there are also clear unsymmetrical elements especially in the center section of the painting.

The bottom panel consists of a boar surrounded by openmouthed lions. There is really not much attempt at balance in this panel with the exception of the heraldic position of the lions. Admittedly there is no precise source for this scene in the existing similes, but there is, however, a close parallel:

> As when a lion overwhelms a tireless boar in combat when the two fight with high hearts on the peaks of a mountain over a small spring and both wish to drink—the lion overcomes the boar as he pants hard, thus did Hector take life from the valiant son of Menoetius . . .
>
> (16.823-28)

The choice of such a simile for a war context is a parallel construction to the scene of the two lions attacking the boar as a balance to the picture of battle in the top panel. The attempt to achieve balance in most of the other details of the sarcophagus cover proves the artist's interest in symmetry and gives a unity to the total composition. If this were the sarcophagus of a warrior chieftain, not only would there be ornament of adequate elaboration for a man of such rank, but the art would convey a fitting epitaph in traditional symbols: he fought like a lion or a boar and perhaps (considering the fallen man over whom the battle has gathered) he even fell in battle fighting like a lion or a boar.

A second example of this type of balance is a sarcophagus from E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*, Pl. 141. There are a few unsymmetrical details in the design: for example, the direction

of the heads of the goats at the lower corners or the design of the decorative band above the goats. The upper picture panel is, however, almost totally symmetrical: two warriors leave their chariots and rush at each other while their charioteers drive away from the conflict. At the bottom a lion approaches a grazing deer. Though there is one other animal on the far left, so little of the paint remains that it is unidentifiable. This is an appropriate simile subject to accompany the scene of a warrior doing battle. The message of the traditional symbols is clear; the warrior who lies in this tomb fought like the lion—or else he could, of course, have fallen like the unsuspecting deer.

One further example which may contain a Homeric subject is in the Pergamon Museum (3145). In the top panel two characters threaten a third. Some scholars have seen Odysseus and Diomedes threatening Dolon although there is much guesswork in such an interpretation.[25] The corresponding bottom panel contains a lion and a panther surrounding a steer; though no simile in the *Doloneia* corresponds exactly, the Greek warriors there are called lions (10.297). More probably the painter and the poet both drew upon a tradition of common connections. The pairing of warriors with lions or panthers is amply precedented in the Homeric corpus.

There are some further examples which need not be discussed in such detail:

1. Louvre (CA 1024): in the top panel there are three individual battle scenes. Two open-mouthed lions attack a grazing cow in the balancing panel at the bottom. The design on the sides is symmetrical including two matching panels of a pair of warriors killing one other warrior. There seems to be a unity in the composition of this sarcophagus cover.

2. Pergamon Museum (#3348): in the top panel Helen is attacked by Menelaus and Odysseus, while in the bottom panel an open-mouthed lion and a panther surround a grazing goat. The design on the sides is symmetrical.

3. Pergamon Museum (#3347): in the top panel two men are fighting over a fallen warrior; on either side is a chariot with a dog beside. In the bottom panel there is a goat surrounded by a lion and a panther. This example is interesting because the bottom panel has the same subject as #3348, which demonstrates that

[25] Pfuhl *op. cit.* (supra, n. 24), p. 169.

there is some continuity of themes at least in the minds of the painters.

4. Pergamon Museum (#4824): In the top panel are two warriors each leading his horse and dog placed about a winged Athena with helmet and shield. In the bottom panel there are a lion and a panther. Once again it is interesting to note the presence of the lion and the panther although the goat is not there. It may be significant that there is no battle in actual progress in the top panel whereas the previously cited examples show the fighting either on the verge of beginning or well underway. This sarcophagus may be making a statement of the battle ability of the buried warrior: whenever he fought he was as brave as a lion or a panther and had the favour of Athena, but he does not happen to be fighting in the top picture and, therefore, there is no weaker animal being attacked in the bottom panel.

II. The Audience and Oral Tradition

In such art works from various periods and scattered locations there is evidence that visual artists, poets, and audiences of both media consciously or unconsciously made similar associations when seeking an explanatory parallel to a specific narrative scene. Admittedly there is only a small amount of pertinent evidence upon which to base firm statements about the oral tradition. There are many unanswered questions; for example:

1. Is this small list exhaustive? Are there no further examples illustrating the connection between simile and narrative?
2. Are there illustrations of simile scenes parallel to picture panels which demonstrate lack of unity?
3. Is there any reason to think that the technique of paralleling two scenes was wide-spread? Or is there independent evidence that any single creative artist worked in this way?

These are all good questions, and yet to ask them is to misunderstand the collection of evidence offered in this discussion.

In our age of buzzing archaeological activity when new finds are continually appearing, it is hard to feel confidence in any general statement. Too much that is contradictory can be discovered in a brief time, as writers on the Bronze Age are continually learning.

I have discussed in all nineteen examples of a particular point. This point is literary, and it is in literature that whatever proof can be found exists. It would be dangerous to estimate even what percentage of the art of their particular period is comprised by the few pieces of evidence herein cited, and I would be surprised to find that in each case more than a minor percentage of the existing art supported the precise connection of narrative and simile subject. My intent is to note several occasions when the artist thought like his literary colleague.

It is readily admitted that there was no constraint as binding as meter which drove the artist to resort to traditional motifs or even to create a unity that can be perceived today. Conviction in these interpretations can only arise from viewing the individual work of each artist as a conscious effort to make a statement in his own medium; some artists may, at varied times and in different cities, have drawn on the folk traditions known by many men to express their thoughts. Ultimately, of course, each work of art must be judged in itself; in its composition, in its subject, and in its effect.

That some pertinent works of art have come from the later part of the sixth century and from varied locations should not militate against the comparison of their evidence with that of an epic of the eight century B.C. First there is evidence in the existence of the mysterious Homeridae that there was some sort of continuation of the Homeric poems. Second, the stories of Lycurgus and Peisistratus show that there was considerable authority in the Homeric poems in various parts of the Greek world down to the beginning of the fifth century. Plato's rhapsode Ion is further testimony to the eagerness of people for the familiar old words. Most decisively, it was the living quality of the Homeric tradition in the hearts of men which compelled Plato to fight so strenuously against poetry's widely corrupting effect in his new state. There is then ample evidence that the Homeric songs lived on in continuing vigor among the people of the Greek world into the 5th century and beyond.

But the most important reason for continuing this study of the Homeric similes far beyond the actual composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is the nature of the topic. Neither the epic poems nor the specific art works are the actual objects of discussion since this study is directed toward the tradition which underlies both poetry and visual art. Such a tradition cannot be dated precisely because it is carried on for an indeterminate length of time by an amorphous

mass of people, commonly referred to as the "audience" in Homeric criticism or the "viewer" in art criticism. Audience and viewer are really the same man at any particular point.

And it is this group, the "audience", to whom the poet so diligently catered. The glimpses of Phemius and Demodocus and, in addition, our first-hand knowledge of Yugoslav bards reveal that the aim of oral poets is communication with and entertainment of their audiences. There is little room in such societies for the individualistic poet who expresses his own feelings in a personal language with scant concern for his audience. The whole technique of oral poetry —the familiar story from legend, the type scenes, ringcomposition, foreshadowing, retrospection, and many other features—were devices by which the poet avoided losing his audience.[26] The vast majority of the formulae, both the simpler ones like the noun-epithet combinations and the more complex type-scenes with their variations, were an aid not only to the poet who arranged them and altered them as he composed but also to his audience. They did not need to listen to the subtleties of each phrase but could concentrate on the movement from block to block and could appreciate the variation because of their intimate knowledge of the more traditional phrasing. The audience were the critics who had to be satisfied since they hired the poet and could dispense with him bruskly. Because of the importance of this audience's insistence on a good story told to a relentless meter, there would have been little reward for innovation, and, in fact, there is much danger for a poet in becoming entangled in complications which would prevent his audience from following the story. There is, then, in both audience and poet a natural tendency toward conservatism: toward the old legends told in the old way. The audience was as much a supporter of the oral tradition as the various singers who practiced the art.

This is a statement of extreme importance. The oral tradition is not only maintained by generation after generation of practicing poets, but it is also continuously imposed by the audience. Such limitation may hamper the poet who wishes to create freely, but it

[26] For discussion of these techniques and their effectiveness in guiding the audience see: G. E. Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Princeton 1933); B. A. van Groningen, "Éléments Inorganiques dans la Composition de l'*Iliade* et de l'*Odyssée*," *Revue des Études Homériques* 5 (1935), pp. 3-24; J. A. Notopoulos, "Continuity and Interconnexion in Homeric Oral Composition," *TAPhA* 82 (1951), pp. 81-101; and A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge 1960).

is an indispensable aid to the poet who will create within the tradition. The whole technique of slight variation on a type scene depends on the audience's close knowledge of the standard form. The "Game of Analogy" is not a game played privately by the poet, because the audience raised on the oral tradition would also appreciate the virtuosity of the poet.[27] There is a total background of epic words, epic phrases, and epic stories and values which have been built into the audience as they have into the growing and maturing poet. As one critic puts it:

> "Both the audience and the poet of the oral literatures are bound to the past by invisible complex ties which bind the audience, the oral poet, and the traditional material into an intimate trinity. The poet and the audience are intimately related to their traditional material by ties that are not formally manifest in the story".[28]

One small part of this tradition shared between poet and audience is seen in the study of the traditional nature of the similes. Both poet and audience would have been acquainted not only with the type of simile which the poet chose to sing at various moments in the narrative, but also with the alternate methods for continuing the story which the poet had passed over. Both would be accustomed to repeated simile subjects in certain narrative contexts and would appreciate the implicit comment when a subject was used in an unusual context; for example, there is a type of subsidiary statement of character being made when the poet compares the anxious Penelope to a lion (Od. 4.791). These two choices—placement and subject matter—were made by the poet in accordance with the tradition quite often and, the audience was fully aware of the fact that the poet had so chosen. The poet could always develop the simile in whatever way seemed appropriate to him, and the audience would be more able to follow and appreciate such variation because of their intimate acquaintance with the tradition. In doing so the individual members of the audience were drawing upon experiences ingrained from childhood. Poet and audience, each in his own way, participated in the combined creation of the oral song.

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[27] Parry, pp. 221-227.
[28] Notopoulos *op. cit.* (supra, n. 26), p. 99.

Folk tradition can cover a wide area. Even though this study has focused on the simile, which is a small component of heroic verse, the implications are extensive. A traditional art of any kind is based in a broad understanding of folk culture, but this is especially true of the traditional art of story-telling which inevitably comments upon all facets of life, attitude, and value of a people. J. A. Notopoulos draws a modern parallel:

> . . . the traditional oral art is only natural and inevitable for an oral society whose life is traditional. The poet, his art, his audience, are part of it. A modern Greek villager lives, as we have seen, completely in a world of formulae, exhibited in his poetry, in his music, the patterns in a girl's weaving of her dowry, in the ikons, in all social, agricultural, and religions patterns of life . . . The formula is both a linguistic and sociological phenomenon. It is imposed on the form of the poem both from within the poet and from without by his audience.[29]

It is such a tradition which lies at the roots of the pairing techniques which appear to be similar in oral art and visual art from Mycenean times down to the Archaic Age, though it is very difficult to find convincing independent evidence for many of the features of the epic. Regarding the selection of simile subjects there are several art objects which show artists of various periods drawing on the knowledge of the folk tradition possessed by themselves and by their viewers. That they did not do this consistently is unfortunate for the Homerist but familiar to anyone who has attempted to define with any precision the connections between art and literature in the general cultural trends of a period.

From the contributions of two further areas external to more direct studies of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* it is possible to formulate a more consistent and unified conception of the developing tradition which lies at the root of the Homeric simile:

A. *Studies of Language*: G. P. Shipp in his book, The *Language of Homer*, comes to the following conclusion: "The similes of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are characterized by linguistic lateness. Late forms

[29] J. A. Notopoulos, "Studies in Early Greek Oral Poetry,' *'HSCP* 68 (1964), pp. 1-77 on page 53. See also his article "The Generic and Oral Composition in Homer," *TAPhA* 81 (1950), pp. 28-36.

occur much more frequently in them than in the narrative, and archaisms are hardly found. More than half the similes of any length include late forms, and no significant difference is observable between the similes of different parts of the poem".[30]

B. *Studies of Oral Formulae*: J. B. Hainsworth has written: "Supposing each bard replaced 20% of his formulae in his lifetime, and if there are fifty years between master and pupil, then in the latter half of the eighth century only about 15% of his formulae would reach back into the Mycenaean age".[31]

In support of this statement the study of A. Hoekstra offers evidence that the formulae were being revamped at a more intense rate toward the period when the poems were sung.[32]

Such arguments focusing on the language and phrasing of the poems in general and the similes in particular demonstrate a recent formulation of the individual additive lines and the individual features of each simile, though there is strong indication in art works that standard connections were made by artists from the Mycenaean period down to the time of Homer. That artists widely spread throughout the Aegean world could draw upon this tradition is evidence that the tradition had spread quite broadly and deeply into the hearts and minds of the people of Greece. It seems that the phrasing of each simile may often be new, but the idea of the simile as a means of expression, its placement, its subject matter, and the connection of that subject matter to various scenes in the epic were quite old and had probably become traditional from centuries and centuries of oral story telling.

The members of the audience remain the most important figures in any study of tradition both in the restrictions which they place upon the poet and in the advantage their special type of knowledge offers to the poet. In the fullest degree, it is their tradition. The poet shares it by birthright, but he does not own it. When he composed his similes, he was drawing upon a tradition formed by singers and

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[30] Shipp, p. 208.

[31] J. B. Hainsworth, "The Homeric Formula and the Problem of Its Transmission," *BICS* 9 (1962), pp. 57-68 on page 66.

[32] A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* (Amsterdam 1965). But see also the cautionary statements in reviews by W. McLeod in *Phoenix* 20 (1966), pp. 332-40 and G.S. Kirk in *Gnomon* 38 (1966), pp. 737-40.

their audiences through countless generations. Most probably Homer himself and his contemporaries left their mark upon this continuing tradition, but that particular mark cannot be identified with any certainty. The weight and the influence of the oral tradition was so massive that innovations or additions made by any one poet—even an incandescently brilliant poet like Homer—were absorbed into the anonymity of the inherited poetic conglomerate. It is this indissoluble blending of the new with the very old which underlies the composition of the similes, and it is this method of composition which allows us to speak of the oral nature of the Homeric simile.

When the analysis of the similes has ended and all conclusions have been drawn, even the most dedicated admirers of individual images must admit that these small pictures are but a minor part of the Homeric poet's consideration. What simile—even in its most intricate and sensitive development—could be an achievement equal to the portrayal of Achilles or Odysseus? What simile could have the emotional impact of the wondrous meeting of Priam and Achilles or the tender parting of Hector and Andromache? The simile is a well-defined, independent unit which can be admired for its many virtues, but it is the joining of simile and narrative which gives reciprocal life to both elements. It is perhaps effective to say that a warrior is like a lion, or a fire, or a bird, or a tree; but if he is not initially like a warrior, then he is really nothing at all. The aim of the poet is to subject the traditional form of the simile to the narrative so thoroughly that the two form one poetic whole. If the simile is removed, the narrative is deprived of luster and the simile loses its majesty. To separate the two is impossible if the poet knows his craft well. As a friend of Prof. Bassett is reported to have said, "To gather the similes apart from their setting is like abstracting the plums from a pudding".[33]

[33] S. E. Bassett, "The Function of the Homeric Simile," *TAPhA* 52 (1921), p. 132.

APPENDIX

A CLASSIFICATION OF THE SIMILES BY LOCATION AND SUBJECT MATTER

Column One lists the context in which the simile is placed using the following abbreviations of section headings from Chapter 2 where categories are discussed more fully:

1. The Journeys of Gods—Journey
2. Measurement—Measure
3. Actions of Divine Beings, Spirits, and Monsters—Unusual
4. Themes of Specific Emotions Psychological
5. Variation of Standard Themes—Variation
6. General Scenes of the Armies —Army
7. Summary Scenes before Battle—Summary
8. Entrance of the Hero—Entrance
9. Withdrawal of the Hero—Withdrawal
10. Anticipated Meetings—Meeting
11. Joining of Two Scenes—Join
12. Emphasis in Short Episodes—Emphasis
13. Emphasis on Continuing Motifs—Event
14. Similes in Speeches—Speech

Column Two classifies the similes by subject matter and the context in which the simile occurs using the following abbreviations from section heads in Chapter 3 where these categories are discussed more fully:

1. Lion Similes—Lion
2. Wind and Sea Similes—Wind
3. Fire Similes—Fire
4. Gods and Goddesses—God
5. Tree Similes—Tree
6. Wolf Similes—Wolf
7. Deer Similes—Deer
8. Stele Similes—Stele
9. Diver Similes—Diver
10. Hunting Similes—Hunt

11. Similes of Children—Child
12. Swarms of Insects—Insect
13. Fish Similes—Fish
14. River Similes—River
15. Bird Similes—Bird
16. Farm Animal Similes—Animal

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Iliad, Book 1			
47	Journey		
104	Psychological	Fire	Anger
265	Variation	God	Enter battle
	Summary		
	Speech		
359	Journey		
Iliad, Book 2			
87	Army	Insect	Number
144	Army	Wind	Movement
147	Army	Wind	Movement
209	Army	Wind	Noise
289	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
	Army		
337	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
	Army		
394	Army	Wind	Noise
455	Summary	Fire	Gleam
459	Summary	Bird	About to attack
	Measure		
468	Summary	Flowers,	Number
	Measure	etc.	
469	Summary	Insects	Number
	Measure		
474	Summary		
478	Summary	God	Enter battle
480	Summary	Animal	
754			
764	Measure	Bird	
780	Summary	Fire	Fighting warriors
781	Summary	Fire	Fighting warriors
800	Speech	Leaves,	Number
	Measure	etc.	
872	Variation	Child	Unwarlike

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Iliad, Book 3			
2-3	Summary	Bird	Enter battle
10	Summary		
23	Psychological Meeting	Lion	Emotion: joy
33	Psychological Meeting		
60	Speech		
151	Entrance		
196-7	Speech Variation	Animal	
222	Speech	Snow	
230	Speech Variation	God	
449	Entrance		
Iliad, Book 4			
75	Journey	Fire	God
130	Unusual	Child	Protection
141	Withdrawal		
243	Speech Army	Deer	Fear
253	Summary Variation	Lion	Warlike spirit
275	Summary Variation		
277	Measure		
394	Summary	God	Enter battle
422	Summary	Wind	Movement
433	Summary	Animal	
452	Army	River	Fighting army
462	Variation	Tower	
471	Army	Wolf	Attack
482	Variation	Tree	Dead
Iliad, Book 5			
5	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
87	Entrance	River	Sweep
136	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warrior
161	Variation	Lion	Fighting warrior
299	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warrior
438	Unusual	God	Attack
459	Unusual Speech	God	Attack

Similes	Column I	Column II	
476	Speech	Lion	Fighting warrior
	Army		
487	Speech	Fish	Dead
499	Army	Wind	
522	Army	Wind	Lack of movement
554	Variation	Lion	Fighting warriors
560	Variation	Tree	Dead
597	Unusual	River	Sweep
	Army		
770	Measure		
	Journey		
778	Unusual	Bird	God
782	Army	Lion	Fighting warriors
860	Unusual		
	Measure		
864	Journey		
884	Speech	God	Attack
	Unusual		
902	Unusual		
	Measure		

Iliad, Book 6

295	Measure	Fire	Gleam
401	Entrance	Fire	Worth
506	Entrance	Animal	Enter battle
513	Entrance	Fire	Gleam

Iliad, Book 7

4	Entrance	Wind	Emotion: relief
59	Unusual	Bird	God
63	Army	Wind	Movement
208	Entrance	God	Enter battle
219	Entrance	Tower	
235	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
256		Lion	Fighting warriors

Iliad, Book 8

131	Army	Animal	
271	Entrance	Child	Protection
305	Entrance	God	Enter narrative
306	Variation		
338	Army	Hunt	Pursuit and attack
555	Army	Fire	Gleam

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Iliad, Book 9			
4	Psychological	Wind	Emotion: confusion
	Army		
14	Psychological		
323	Speech	Bird	
481	Speech	Family	
Iliad, Book 10			
5	Psychological		
154	Variation	Fire	Gleam
183	Army	Animal	
297	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warriors
351	Measure	Animal	Enter battle
360	Meeting	Hunt	Pursuit and attack
437	Speech	Wind	Movement
	Measure		
485	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
547	Speech	Fire	Worth
	Unusual		
Iliad, Book 11			
27	Entrance		
60	Summary	God	Enter battle
62	Summary	Fire	Fighting warrior
66	Summary	Fire	Gleam
67	Army		
72	Army	Wolf	Attack
113	Variation	Lion	Fighting warrior
129	Variation	Lion	Fighting warrior
147			
155	Army	Fire	Fighting warrior
172	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
237			
239	Variation	Lion	Fighting warrior
269	Withdrawal		
292	Entrance	Hunt	Pursuit
295	Entrance	God	Enter battle
297	Entrance	Wind	Attack
305	Army	Wind	Attack
324	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warriors
383	Speech	Lion	Fighting warriors
389	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
414	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
474	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
	Entrance		

Similes	Column I	Column II	
485	Entrance	Tower	
492	Army	River	Destructive sweep
546	Join		
548	Join	Lion	Emotion: stubbornness
558	Join	Animal	
596	Army	Fire	Fighting warriors
604	Entrance	God	Enter
638	Entrance	God	Enter
747	Speech Entrance	Wind	Attack

Iliad, Book 12

40	Army Entrance	Wind	Attack
41	Army Entrance	Lion	Emotion: warlike spirit
130	Entrance	God	Enter battle
132	Entrance	Trees	Unmoving
146	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warriors
156	Army	Snow	
167	Speech Army	Insect	Ferocity
278	Army	Snow	
293	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warrior
299	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warrior
375	Army	Wind	Movement
385	Variation	Diver	Falling man
421	Army		
433	Army		
451	Event		
463	Event		

Iliad, Book 13

39	Army	Fire Wind	Fighting warriors } Noise Movement }
53	Speech	Fire	Fighting warrior
62	Unusual	Bird	God
101	Speech Army	Deer	Fear
137	Army		
178	Variation	Tree	Dead
198	Emphasis	Lion	Fighting warrior
242	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
292	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
298	Entrance	God	Enter

Similes	Column I	Column II	
330	Entrance	Fire	Fighting warrior
334	Army	Wind	Movement
389	Variation	Tree	Dead
437	Unusual	Stele	Unmoving
		Tree	Unmoving
470		Child	Unwarlike
471		Lion	Fighting warrior
492	Army	Animal	
531		Bird	Attack
564	Unusual		
571	Variation	Animal	Dead warrior
588			
654	Variation		
673	Army	Fire	Fighting warriors
688	Army	Fire	Fighting warrior
703	Army	Animal	
754		Mountain	
795	Summary	Wind	Movement
802	Summary	God	Enter

Iliad, Book 14

16	Psychological	Wind	Emotion: confusion
148	Unusual		
185	Unusual	Fire	Gleam
290	Unusual	Bird	God
386	Unusual	Fire	Gleam
394 ⎫	Army	Wind	Noise
396 ⎬	Army	Fire	Noise
398 ⎭	Army	Wind	Noise
413	Withdrawal		
414	Withdrawal	Tree	Wounded warrior
499			

Iliad, Book 15

80	Journey		
170	Journey	Snow	
237	Journey	Bird	God
263	Entrance	Animal	Enter battle
271	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
323	Army	Lion	Fighting warriors
358	Measure		
362	Unusual	Child	
381	Army	Wind	Movement
410	Army		
579	Emphasis	Hunt	Pursuit and attack

Similes	Column I	Column II	
586	Emphasis		
592	Army	Lion	Fighting warriors
605	Unusual	God	Fighting warrior
		Fire	Fighting warrior
618	Army	Wind	Unmoving
624	Army	Wind	Emotion: confusion
630	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
679	Join		
690	Join	Bird	Attack
Iliad, Book 16			
3	Psychological		
	Entrance		
7	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
	Psychological		
156	Summary	Wolf	About to enter battle
192	Summary	Family	
	Variation		
212	Summary		
259	Army	Insect	Ferocity
	Summary		
297	Army		
352	Army	Wolf	Attack
364	Army		
384	Meeting	River	
406		Fish	Kill
428	Meeting	Bird	Enter battle
482	Meeting	Tree	Dead
	Variation		
487	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warrior
582	Entrance	Bird	Attack
589	Measure		
633	Army		
641	Army	Insect	Number
705	Unusual	God	Attack
742	Variation	Diver	Falling man
752	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warrior
756	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warrior
765	Army	Wind	Movement
786	Army	God	Attack
823	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warriors
Iliad, Book 17			
4	Entrance	Animal	
20	Speech	Lion	Fighting warrior

Similes	Column I	Column II	
53	Variation	Tree	Dead
61	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
88	Entrance	Fire	Fighting warrior & Gleam
109	Withdrawal	Lion	Emotion: stubbornness
128	Entrance	Tower	
133	Entrance	Lion	Fighting warrior
263	Summary Army	Wind	Noise
281	Army	Lion	Fighting warrior
366	Army	Fire	Fighting warriors
389	Army		
434		Stele	Unmoving
460	Entrance	Bird	Attack
520	Variation	Animal	
542		Lion	Physical appearance
547	Journey		
657	Withdrawal	Lion	Emotion: stubbornness
674	Withdrawal	Bird	
725	Join	Lion	Fighting warrior
737	Join	Fire	Fighting warriors
742	Join	Animal	
747	Join	River	Fighting army
755	Join	Bird	Attack

Iliad, Book 18

1	Army	Fire	Fighting warriors
56	Speech	Tree	Dead
57	Speech	Tree	Dead
110	Speech	Fire	Anger
154	Join	Fire	Fighting warrior
161	Join	Lion	Fighting warrior
207	Unusual	Fire	Gleam
219	Unusual		
318	Psychological	Lion	Emotion: warlike spirit
437	Speech	Tree	Dead
438	Speech	Tree	Dead
600			
616	Journey	Bird	God

Iliad, Book 19

17	Psychological	Fire	Anger
282	Entrance	God	Entrance
286	Entrance	God	Entrance
350	Journey	Bird	God

Similes	Column I	Column II	
357	Army	Snow	
366	Psychological	Fire	Anger
374	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
375	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
381	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
386	Entrance		
398	Entrance	Fire	Gleam
		God	Enter battle

Iliad, Book 20

46	Entrance	God	Enter battle
51	Unusual	Wind	
164	Meeting	Lion	Fighting warrior
200	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
244	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
252	Speech		
	Meeting		
371	Speech	Fire	Fighting warrior
403	Variation	Animal	
423	Meeting	Fire	Fighting warrior
431	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
447	Unusual	God	Attack
490	Army	Fire	Fighting warrior
493	Army	God	Attack
495	Army	Animal	

Iliad, Book 21

12	Army	Fire	Fighting warrior
18	Army	God	Attack
22	Army	Fish	Kill
29	Event	Deer	Fear
227	Army	God	Attack
237	Unusual	Animal	
251	Measure		
252	Unusual	Bird	
257	Unusual		
282	Speech	Child	Unwarlike
346	Unusual	Wind	
362	Unusual		
464	Speech	Leaves, etc.	
493	Journey	Bird	God
	Unusual		
522	Army	Fire	Fighting warrior
573	Unusual		
	Entrance		

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Iliad, Book 22			
1	Army	Deer	Fear
22	Meeting	Animal	
26	Meeting	Fire	Gleam
93	Meeting		
127	Speech		
132	Entrance Meeting	God	Enter battle
134	Meeting	Fire	Gleam
139	Meeting	Bird	Attack
150		Fire	
151		Snow	
162	Meeting	Animal	
189	Meeting	Hunt	Pursuit
199	Meeting		
262	Speech	Lion Wolf	
308	Meeting	Bird	Attack
317	Meeting	Fire	Gleam
Iliad, Book 23			
100	Unusual		
222	Event		
366	Army	Wind	
431	Measure		
455	Measure	Fire	Gleam
517	Measure	Animal	
598	Psychological		
692		Fish	
712			
760	Measure		
845	Measure		
Iliad, Book 24			
41	Speech Psychological	Lion	Emotion: warlike spirit
80	Journey		
317	Measure		
480	Psychological		
572		Lion	Emotion: warlike spirit
699	Entrance	God	Enter
Odyssey, Book 1			
308	Speech	Family	
320	Journey	Bird	God
371	Speech	God	

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Odyssey, Book 2			
5	Entrance	God	Enter
47	Speech	Family	
234	Speech	Family	
Odyssey, Book 3			
290	Measure	Mountain	
372	Journey	Bird	God
468	Entrance	God	Enter
Odyssey, Book 4			
32	Speech	Child	Ineptitude
45		Fire	Gleam
122	Entrance	God	Enter
310	Entrance	God	Enter
335	Speech	Lion	Fighting warrior
413	Unusual		
535	Event	Animal	
662	Psychological	Fire	Anger
791	Psychological	Lion	
Odyssey, Book 5			
12	Speech	Family	
51	Journey	Bird	God
249	Measure		
281			
328	Unusual	Wind	
337	Journey	Bird	God
353	Journey	Bird	God
368	Unusual	Wind	
371	Unusual	Animal	
394	Psychological	Family	
432			
488	Join	Fire	Warrior
Odyssey, Book 6			
16	Entrance	God	Enter
20	Journey	Wind	
102	Meeting	God	Enter
130	Meeting	Lion	Warrior
231	Unusual	Hyacinth	
232	Unusual		
309	Entrance	God	Enter

Similes	Column I	Column II	
Odyssey, Book 7			
5	Entrance	God	Enter
36	Speech Measure	Bird	
84		Fire	Gleam
106	Variation	Leaves	
291	Speech Entrance	God	Enter
Odyssey, Book 8			
14	Speech Entrance	God	Enter
115	Summary	God	Enter
124	Measure	Animal	
174	Speech Variation	God	
280	Unusual		
518	Entrance	God	Enter
523	Psychological		
Odyssey, Book 9			
4	Speech	God	
51	Measure	Leaves, etc.	
191	Unusual	Mountain	
289	Unusual		
292	Unusual	Lion	Warriorlike
314	Unusual		
322	Measure		
384	Unusual		
391	Unusual		
473	Measure		
Odyssey, Book 10			
113	Measure Unusual	Mountain	
124	Unusual	Fish	Dead
216	Unusual Speech	Animal	
304	Unusual		
410	Psychological	Animal	
Odyssey, Book 11			
222	Unusual		
243	Measure	Mountain	
368	Speech		

Similes	Column I	Column II	
411	Event	Animal	
413	Event	Animal	
605	Unusual	Bird	
606	Unusual		
Odyssey, Book 12			
86	Measure		
	Speech		
181	Measure		
237	Unusual		
251	Unusual	Fish	Kill
413	Unusual	Diver	Falling man
418	Unusual	Bird	
433	Unusual		
Odyssey, Book 13			
31	Psychological		
81		Animal	
Odyssey, Book 14			
21	Emphasis		
175	Speech	Tree	Dead
308	Unusual	Bird	
476			
Odyssey, Book 15			
108	Measure	Fire	Gleam
152	Speech	Family	
414	Entrance	God	Enter
479		Bird	
Odyssey, Book 16			
17	Meeting	Family	
216	Meeting	Bird	
Odyssey, Book 17			
37	Entrance	God	Enter
111	Speech	Family	
126	Speech	Lion	Fighting warrior
397	Speech	Family	
463			
518	Meeting		
Odyssey, Book 18			
27	Speech		
29	Speech		

Similes	Column I	Column II	
193	Unusual		
240	Speech		
296	Variation	Fire	Gleam
Odyssey, Book 19			
39	Speech	Fire	Gleam
	Unusual		
54	Entrance	God	Enter
109	Speech		
205	Psychological	Snow	
	Meeting		
211	Psychological		
	Meeting		
233	Speech		
	Emphasis		
234	Speech	Fire	Gleam
	Emphasis		
494	Speech		
518	Speech		
	Psychological		
574	Speech		
Odyssey, Book 20			
14	Psychological	Animal	
25	Psychological		
Odyssey, Book 21			
14	Entrance	God	Enter
37	Entrance	God	Enter
48	Event	Animal	
406	Event		
411	Event	Bird	
Odyssey, Book 22			
240	Unusual	Bird	God
299	Army	Animal	
302	Army	Bird	Attack
384	Army	Fish	Dead
402	Army	Lion	Physical appearance
468		Bird	
Odyssey, Book 23			
(48	Speech	Lion	Physical appearance)
158	Unusual		
	Meeting		

Similes	Column I	Column II	
159	Unusual		
	Meeting		
163	Entrance	God	Enter
	Meeting		
191	Speech		
	Measure		
233	Psychological		
	Meeting		

Odyssey, Book 24

6	Unusual		
148	Speech	Fire	Gleam
	Measure		
371	Unusual	God	
538	Entrance	Bird	Attack

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